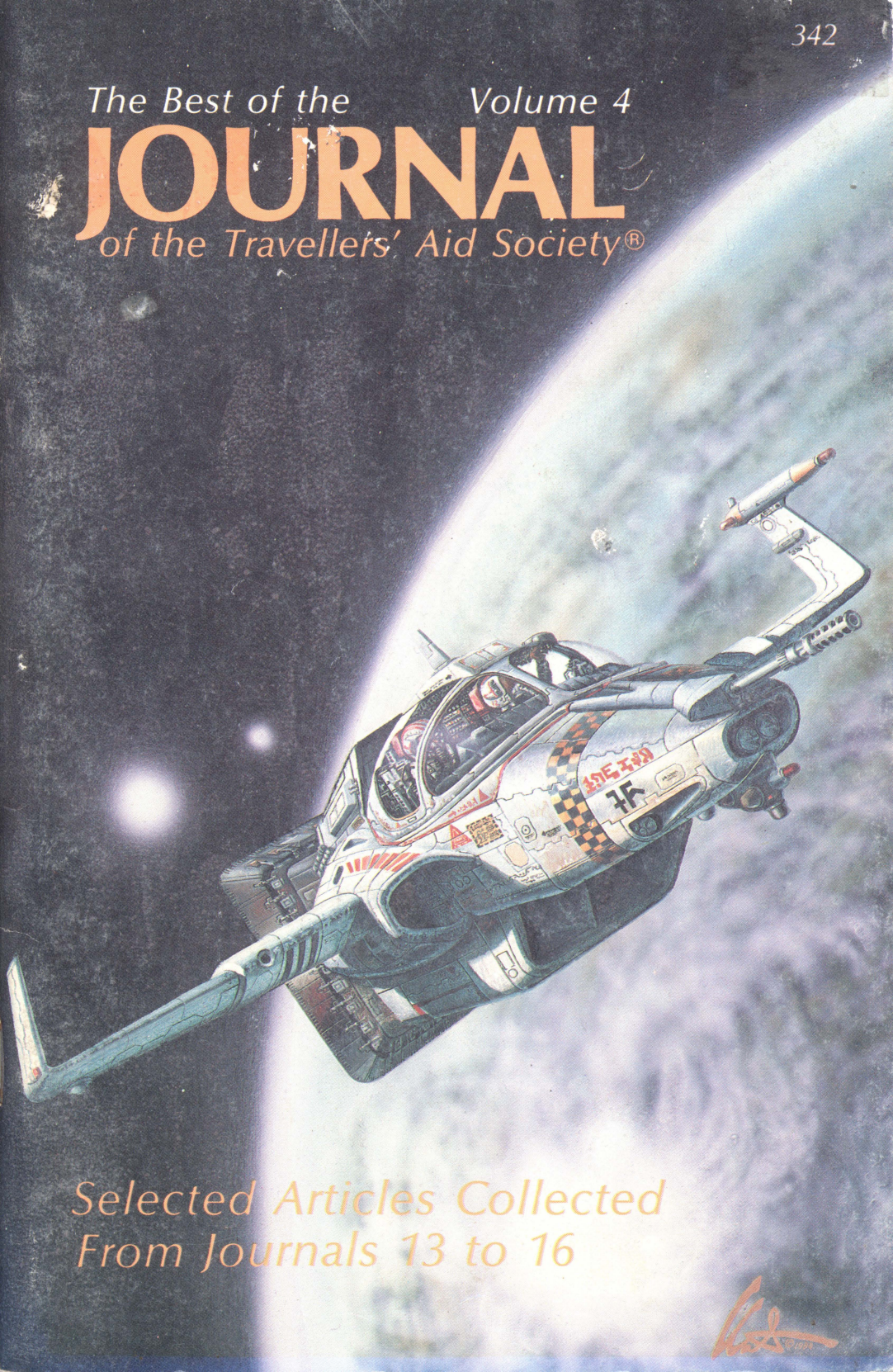
342

The Best of the Volume 4

# JOURNAL

of the Travellers' Aid Society®



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# The Best of the JOURNAL of the Travellers' Aid Society® Volume 4


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Dates in these issues of the *Journal* are given in accordance with an arbitrary Imperial calendar, of 365 days. The expression of date consists of a three-digit day number (showing the day of the year) followed by a dash and the four-digit year number (showing the current year since the founding of the Imperium).

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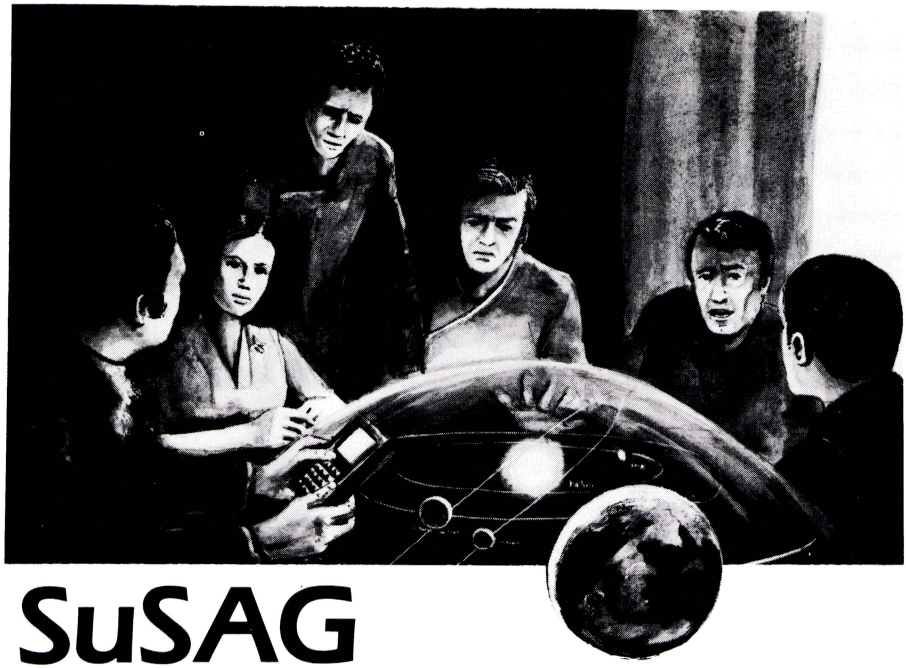


# SuSAG

Although no two megacorporations are exactly alike, there are enough similarities between them to allow a study of one to serve as a study of all. The following general survey of the history, organization and activities of SuSAG will serve to illustrate how megacorporations operate and delineate their powers and limitations.

## HISTORY

Schunamann und Sohn, AG, LIC was founded in 252 by Gustav Schunamann, a professor of biochemical engineering and his son Reinhardt, a doctor of medicine.

A few years earlier, the elder Schunamann had resigned his position at the Imperial University to pursue private research. The result of this research was the discovery of a radically new technique for the isolation of various forms of the psionic drug, psioniline. Schunamann patented the process and licensed it to several manufacturing concerns. By 252, using the royalties which had accumulated, the Schunamanns purchased a near bankrupt pharmaceuticals company which carried an old Sylean charter (and was thus entitled to a limited Imperial charter automatically) and renamed it Schunamann und Sohn AG, LIC (retaining the archaic AG). Shortly afterward, Schunamann announced a new, more efficient process (which he had evidently discovered years before) and the new company, (commonly known as SuSAG) rapidly drove almost all competing drugs off the market.

The company's early years were stormy ones. The Imperial University brought suit against SuSAG, charging that Schunamann had developed his processes while at the university, and thus they belonged to the government. Other firms brought numerous other lawsuits. SuSAG defended itself successfully from all these attacks, but they instilled in SuSAG and the Schunamann family a corporate paranoia which was to heavily color the firm's actions for the first

two centuries of its existence. This paranoia, although it has lessened over the centuries, can still be detected in some of SuSAG's actions to this day.

Perhaps because he was a researcher at heart, Gustav established a policy of devoting large sums to exploratory research, and SuSAG's well-equipped laboratories rapidly attracted some of the best minds in the Imperium, another characteristic of SuSAG which persists to this day. Gustav's heavy emphasis on research brought the company numerous new products and manufacturing processes, which laid a strong foundation for the company's future growth. The discoveries were not always in the field of pharmaceuticals, however, and the company began to diversify into medical products in general, and later into related areas such as chemistry and geneering (genetic engineering). The deep-set paranoia of the early years prevented SuSAG from selling or licensing any of its discoveries to other companies. Many good ideas languished in the company files for years, because SuSAG did not have the resources to develop them, but did not want any other company to benefit from them.

SuSAG's dominance of the psi drug market caused it to be hardest hit by the Psionics Suppressions of 800 to 826. The manufacture and sale of all psionic drugs was declared illegal, all manufacturing plants within the Imperium closed down, and all stockpiles confiscated. Although SuSAG had considerably diversified its activities by this time, the suppressions nearly destroyed the company. The massive loss of revenue forced a number of emergency measures on the company, including sizable loans from other megacorporations. As part of the arrangements, large blocks of SuSAG stock were transferred to the other firms. Up until that time, the Schunamann family had retained over 75% of SuSAG stock, and the forced transfer caused considerable loss of revenue to the family. Eventually, some of this stock was reclaimed, but significant amounts are still retained by others, most notably Hortalez et Cie (9%), GSbAG (5%), and Sternmetal Horizons LIC. (3%). The resulting change in the composition of the board of directors was ultimately beneficial for SuSAG, since it diluted the paranoid tendencies of the Schunamann family, which had dominated the board up to that time.

Although it took decades to recover from the damage done by the loss of the Psionic Suppressions, SuSAG resumed a slow, steady growth, gradually expanding into new markets, such as synthetics, industrial chemicals, and (most controversially) chemical and biological warfare agents for the Imperial military. SuSAG is responsible for a number of major advances in anagathic research, and is one of the largest suppliers of anagathic drugs in the Imperium. In addition, through a number of factories located outside the Imperium (owned by a chain of subsidiary companies), SuSAG has continued the manufacture of psionic drugs, some of which illicitly find their way back into the Imperium, where they bring premium prices because of their quality and purity. SuSAG does not engage in smuggling of these drugs into the Imperium.

Throughout its development, SuSAG made it a policy to purchase control of numerous subsidiary companies. Often it was cheaper for SuSAG to acquire an existing company in order to move operations into a new region of space or to move into a new field. Often SuSAG would buy a company to engage in operations to which SuSAG did not wish to have its name associated. The firms outside the Imperium which manufacture psionic drugs are owned through a

long and complex chain of holding companies, dummy corporations, and interlocking directorates.

To catalog the activities of SuSAG and all its subsidiary companies would take more space than is available here. Basically, it can be said that if it's done, SuSAG owns at least one company that does it.

Major subsidiary companies are under the control of the board of directors; lesser companies are under the control of the divisional vice-presidents or the regional general managers.

## ORGANIZATION

SuSAG is organized in a similar fashion to most other limited Imperial corporations, that is, there is a board of directors, a president, and numerous vice-presidents. One vice-president is responsible for the control of one of the seven divisions of the company: the pharmaceuticals division, the medical and surgical products division, the industrial chemicals division, the geneering division, the CBW (chemical and bacteriological warfare) division, the research division, and the extra-Imperial division.

Each divisional vice-president has a number of executive assistants which are not directly in the chain of command. These assist in the administration and operation of the division, but do not set policy.

Under the divisional vice-presidents are the division's numerous regional general managers. The most important operating officers of SuSAG, these RGMs and their assistants control the operations of a SuSAG division inside a particular region of space. A region may range in size from a few systems in the heavily populated regions of the Imperium around Core sector, to several subsectors in more sparsely populated regions. Note that the boundaries of a region belonging to one division often do not completely coincide with those of another.

In frontier regions, one person may occupy the position of RGM for several divisions. In more densely populated areas, there are several RGMs, who may consult with one another, but only have authority over their own division's activities. This system could lead to interdivisional rivalry, but seldom does, since each SuSAG division rarely competes directly with another. Many times, however, subsidiary companies will be working at cross-purposes, sometimes actually engaging in trade wars with

other SuSAG subsidiaries. Naturally, these are ended as soon as they are discovered, but with an entity as large as SuSAG, it is difficult to keep track of who is and who is not on your side.

*Advertising:* An overall advertising policy is set by the board of directors. Individual divisions each have an advertising executive, responsible for overseeing the advertising for that division. Subsidiary companies coordinate their advertising efforts with those of SuSAG.

*Security:* Many megacorporations contract out all but the most important security measures to independent security companies. SuSAG maintains an unusually large and well-equipped corporate security force which handles all aspects of their security requirements. There are many reasons behind this. Many of SuSAG's products are compact, extremely valuable, and easily resold on the black market. Because of the value of their manufacturing processes, SuSAG manufacturing plants and research installations are often the target of industrial espionage by rival firms. SuSAG's CBW installations are often the subject of raids by terrorists seeking to steal CBW weaponry or sabotage by anti-CBW activists. The company's undeservedly poor reputation for safety, particularly in its CBW plants, causes a great deal of vandalism at all SuSAG installations.

These factors, combined with the company's extreme distrust of any outside agency, explain SuSAG's extensive security establishment.

Most security forces are under the direct control of the various RGMs, and operate only in the region to which they are assigned. The board of directors, however, maintains several units of wide-ranging "trouble-shooters," who are assigned to particular sensitive areas of very important installations.

*Mercenaries:* In spite of its desire to keep everything in house, SuSAG often hires mercenary units for actions with which it does not wish its name (or that of a subsidiary) associated. By company policy, mercenaries can only be hired on the authority of the RGM, but this is usually done through several intermediaries (usually SuSAG security personnel).

## THE DIVISIONS

The operations of SuSAG's various divisions are outlined below.

*Pharmaceuticals Division:* This division manufactures and markets medical drugs for treatment and prevention of various pathological conditions, therapeutic drugs such as anagathics, veterinary and horticultural drugs, and surgical drugs such as anesthetics and muscle-relaxants.

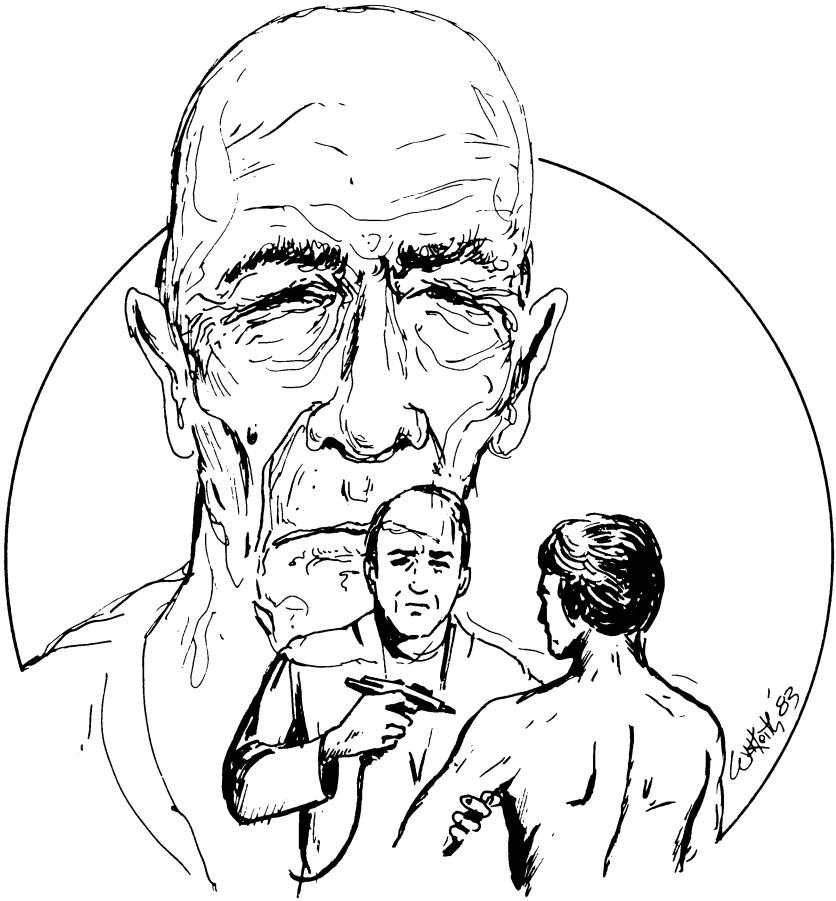
*Medical and Surgical Products Division:* This division manufactures and markets non-pharmaceutical medical and surgical products such as diagnostic equipment, surgical instruments and supplies, and prosthetic devices such as replacement limbs.

*Industrial Chemicals Division:* This division manufactures chemicals used by other companies in manufacturing processes. Several subsidiary companies provide chemicals of extreme purity for scientific applications.

*Geneering Division:* This division manufactures geneered organisms for specific industrial and agricultural applications.

*CBW Division:* This division manufactures chemical and bacteriological weapons and defenses exclusively for the Imperial military and its allies. Despite the fact that all such plants are located on isolated, uninhabitable worlds, this division has a very poor reputation for safety.

*Research Division:* This division is not engaged in manufacturing, but conducts



a constant search for new products and new ways of making old products.

*Extra-Imperial Division:* This division is in charge of all SuSAG activities outside the Imperium, which includes those of all SuSAG subsidiary companies. Many of these activities would be illegal if carried out inside the Imperium, such as the manufacture of psionic drugs.

Because of the lack of reliable protection for its installations and products, SuSAG security teams assigned to extra-Imperial duties are as heavily equipped as most planetary military forces. They are often assigned company starships for the protection of extremely valuable facilities (such as the psi drug factories).

**POLICIES AND GOALS**

SuSAG's main goals are to make money, retain its position of power relative to other megacorporations, retain its control of its current markets, develop new markets for old products, and develop and market new products (nothing really surprising).

SuSAG has a great desire to improve its poor public image, and spends billions of credits annually on advertising with this in mind.

SuSAG facilities engaged in the manufacture of extremely valuable or dangerous products (such as its pharmaceutical, psi and CBW plants) are located in remote and sparsely populated areas whenever possible. This was done to minimize potential deaths in the case of an accident, and to facilitate protec-

tion of the plants and their products. Psi drug plants are especially vulnerable because of the high value of their product on the black market, and receive especially high levels of protection by corporate security. CBW plants are usually assigned units of the Imperial military for protection, but company security at these plants is also heavy.

## CORPORATE/GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

*The Imperium:* The Imperium has the power to tax megacorporations and regulate certain of their actions. SuSAG's power, in certain areas, is probably equal to the Imperium's. Active hostilities, however, would be bad for business.

SuSAG maintains that a stable interstellar government is good for business, and that keeping the Imperium in power is in their own best interests. For this reason, SuSAG never actively opposes the Imperium, or works for its downfall. This does not mean that no SuSAG division ever violates the law, merely that they keep violations to a minimum, and try not to get caught.

Outside the Imperium, SuSAG still exercises restraint in opposing Imperial interests.

*Local Governments:* By Imperial law, SuSAG is required to comply with whatever local laws are in effect. As a general rule, SuSAG prefers not to overtly oppose a legitimate planetary government. Usually, the firm has sufficient covert influence to persuade a government to exempt it from most restrictions.

Unlike most other megacorporations, few worlds are under SuSAG's direct control. This is due to a company policy, promulgated to help SuSAG'S public image. Corporate control of a world is usually resented by the populace, and in SuSAG's case, this could lead to outright rebellion. However, SuSAG retains covert political and economic control of a number of worlds throughout the Imperium and beyond, through subsid iaries.

## SUSAG IN THE SPINWARD MARCHES

SuSAG's presence in the Spinward Marches sector dates from the acquisition of a chemical facility on Mora in 427. Expansion proceeded rapidly, and all divisions were active in the Marches

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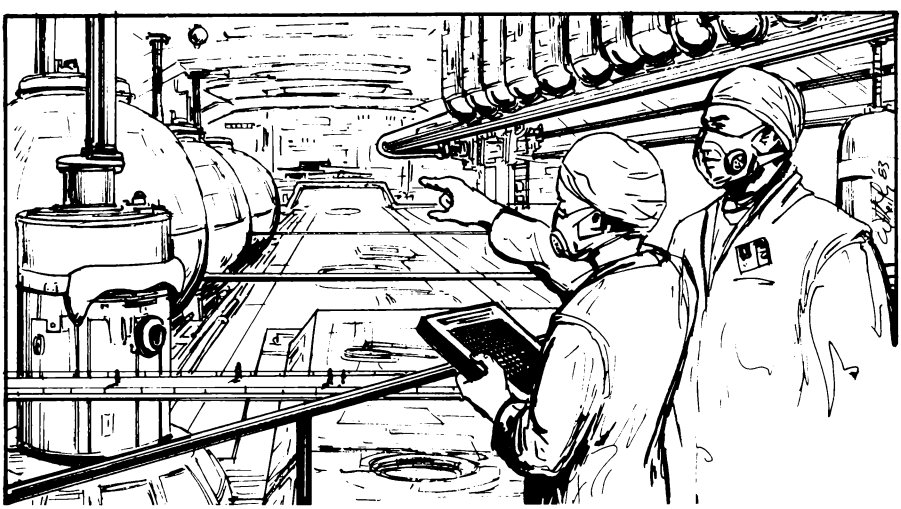


# CONTACT:

# The Darrians

The Darrian Confederation is a loose organization of worlds in the Darrian subsector of the Spinward Marches, currently neutral with respect to the conflicts of the Fifth Frontier War. Some 20% of the Darrian Confederation is of Solomani extraction, 12% of other human races (mostly Vilani) and 8% Aslan. The 60% majority is a minor human race, called the Darrians, who originate from Darrian/Darrian (0607 - A463A55-G).

Darrians average 1.6m in height and weigh about 50 kg. They are thin and wispy in build, with sharp facial features. Skin tones range from orange-tan to pale yellow-tan; Darrians have silky grey or white hair and usually have brown eyes. Aside from their smaller size and other physical minutiae, they are unmistakably human in morphology and mentality.

**HISTORY**

Terran traders, seeking a place of relative stability after the fall of the Rule of Man, made contact with the Darrians in -1511. The Darrians had achieved TL 3 by the time of contact, but the settlement of Terrans on their world sparked a surge of interest in high technology and sciences. While interstellar civilization faded away to rimward, Darrian achieved the ability to construct jump drives by -1137. Colonies on Zamine, Ilium, Mire, and many others were established. Though the early Darrian federation was closely knit, it had a flaw in that most of the technological know-how was concentrated on Darrian itself. In -924, scientists found that Darrian's sun was destabilizing, but before any actions could be taken it erupted, casting off huge flares. Over eighty percent of the population of the world died, as did

many on space stations and ships in the system. The colony worlds were unable to maintain civilization at its old level (TL 16); it was not until 650 years later (-271) that Mire achieved independent jump capability and began to reestablish interstellar communication and trade. Third Imperium scouts contacted the Darrians in 148, by which time other colonies had been established, interstellar trade had fully resumed, and the present Confederation had been established (dating from -238). The Confederation had successfully recovered many of the artifacts and knowledge of the old Darrian civilization, some of which are still used today.

The Darrian Confederation allied itself with the Imperium during the First and Second Frontier Wars, after Zhodani ships penetrated the Confederation's coreward borders. Large numbers of Aslan mercenaries were hired for the Confederation's defense, and (as is usual) the Darrians paid them with large land grants, particularly on Roget and Engrange. There are unconfirmed rumors that the Zhodani withdrew from Darrian space in the Second Frontier War after uncovering evidence that the Darrians were investigating the possibility of inducing subnova flares in several nearby Zhodani systems (Darrian astro-physical science is second to none, even today). Considerable tension still exists with the Zhodani, concerning three worlds in the Querion subsector claimed by the Sword Worlds (backed by the Zhodani Consulate). The Confederation disputes the claim, citing the fact that the worlds were originally settled by Darrians.

Though Darrian is listed as TL 16, in truth it more closely approximates TL 12 for most commonly available goods. There are still a number of stations and facilities able to maintain themselves at TL 16, but many of them are in poor repair at best, and have thus far defied attempts to duplicate them. Some TL 16 weapons systems and engineering systems have apparently been maintained on a few naval vessels.

## SOCIETY

There is a wide range of social systems in effect throughout the Confederation; the influx of many sorts of racial types from different cultures has produced a tolerant and eclectic ethos which tends to emphasize achievement in scholastic and technological areas. Many customs of the ethnic Darrians (Homo darrianus) contain a good deal of old (pre-contact) ritual and can be quite formal, but not all Darrians adhere to these fashions. A stoic element seems to underlie many societies; whether one's fortune is good or bad is often held less important than one's attitude toward life and fellow beings, as fate is not within one's control.

Aslan citizens of the Darrian Confederation have distinctly different attitudes from the rest of their neighbors, particularly towards military and defensive matters. They tend to encourage expansionism and a more aggressive stance in general, especially towards the Sword Worlds.

## GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY

The Confederation allows a great deal of leniency in the management of planetary affairs, being primarily concerned with strategic naval defense, maintenance of trade lanes, and formal diplomatic relations with other stellar communities and worlds. In rare cases, the Confederation will arbitrate disputes between individual worlds, but must be asked to do so by all parties concerned. No particular form of planetary government is favored over any other on a local level. The Confederation government itself is made up of a congress on Mire, whose delegates are elected from their

home worlds by a variety of means.

Confederation naval and ground forces are maintained at TL 9-10 standards for the most part, though certain units may have equipment of TL 13 standard (manufactured on Jacent) or TL 14 (purchased from the Imperium). TL 15 material is rare. A few mercenary forces touring the Spinward Marches are composed of Darrian citizenry, with Aslan disproportionately represented among them. Naval service is quite prestigious, and many government officials are ex-Navy officers. Equipment is carefully maintained and unit organizations tend to be surprisingly tight. Aslan units are organized separately from human units due to equipment requirements.

The export of art objects from Darrian is heavily controlled by the Confederation government, to maintain a hold on the past achievements of the society and to preserve their unique cultural identity.

The seal of the Confederation depicts confluent elements of Solomani and Darrian legend, a phoenix rising from a burning ziggurat.

## REFEREEING THE DARRIANS

*Character Generation:* Ethnic Darrians have their initial strength and endurance scores generated as 1D+3 (4-9). All citizens of the Darrian Confederation get a +1 DM to their education score, regardless of race (maximum score is 15). All other characteristics are rolled normally.

Entry into careers is as per the usual systems. Confederation citizens cannot enter Imperial military services, but the Darrians maintain their own Navy, Army, and Marines. The Darrians have no scout service. The navy is treated as a subsector navy by *High Guard* rules; only characters from Jacent and Darrian will have TL 12+ military training. Individual planets of TL 9+ maintain minor navies, treated as planetary navies by *High Guard;* worlds of TL 7-8 have in-system patrols treated as planetary navies, but all pilot skills earned are replaced by ship's boat skill, and fleet tactics by ship tactics. Only Jacent and Darrian have battle dress forces; elsewhere battle dress skill is treated as vacc suit skill. Cutlass skill is not required in the marines.

Darrian Confederation citizens of any race who travel through the Spinward Marches are most likely to be merchants, followed by common adventurers, military personnel (often retired) on observational missions or in training, or diplomats.

*Playing Darrians:* Ethnic Darrians act much like other humans. Many tend to be stoic, determined, and uncomplaining; they are also generally outgoing and very tolerant of other races and cultures. Some may be eccentric, but all have a strong cultural pride. Though neutral in the Fifth Frontier War, most Darrians are quietly rooting for the Imperium, with which they have trade and arms treaties. Zhodani and Sword Worlders are not much liked at present.

*Playing other Confederation Citizens:* Solomani and other races of Humaniti who live in the Confederation may be generated and played by the usual rules, within the career restrictions noted above. Aslan citizens are generated per *Journal* 7; they retain their samurai-like cultural habits and clan structure and prefer to take up military careers. Aslan NPCs do not apply negative DMs on reaction rolls to other Darrians though they do versus beings from non-Darrian worlds.

— *Roger E. Moore*

# Aces & Eights

*Players' Information:*

While waiting for transport off-world, the group is approached by a representative of Firenze Ltd., a corporation

## AMBER ZONE:

specializing in the pleasures of the wealthy. He offers them high passage and the opportunity to make some money on the trip, if they will do the line a discreet service.

The representative explains that a professional gambler aboard the *Domine Allegro,* a Firenze luxury liner and gambling ship, is suspected of cheating — but no proof of this exists. Rather than create a scene — not to mention the possibility of a lawsuit for false accusation — the line is hiring persons, a few at each of the ship's ports of call, to play against the suspect, both to look for signs of cheating and to keep the line's regular customers from being fleeced. (Professional gamblers are considered to have a perfect right to earn their living; cheats are not.)

Firenze Ltd. will provide high passages for all members of the party, plus Cr10,000 per person in gambling chips. The players will not be permitted to cash these chips; at the end of the trip, the line will collect them. The original stake

will be deducted, and amount left over (i.e., the winnings) the players may keep; their losses will be forgiven. It's a literalization of the old gambler's axiom: you can't lose playing with the house's money.

*Referee's Information:*

When the players board the *Domine Allegro,* each will find a case in his or her stateroom containing KCr10 in Firenze Casinos Division chips and a photograph of the suspected gambler. They will have no trouble locating him, as he spends every waking hour on the casino floor, even taking his meals at the poker table.

This person is Sergeant-Major (retired) Oberon Prester, late of the 1188th "Aces and Eights" Lift Infantry Brigade. Long service infantry veterans (5+ terms) may remember that the 1188th no longer exists, having been all but destroyed in a poorly remembered engagement. Prester will acknowledge this, but refuse to discuss the incident any further.

The sergeant-major is playing continuous hands of five-card stud poker at a five-player table. He does not in fact appear to be cheating — just a damn good poker player (gambling-5, unless one of the players is gambling-4 or better, in which case he will be two skill levels higher than the best player gambler). Despite his skill, his table will always be full (there will never be room for more than two player characters to sit in at any one time); he is a personable, popular fellow, full of stories about every aspect of the brigade's history except its last battle.

He carries at all times a deck of playing cards; the backs bear the regimental insignia, a skeleton hand holding a fan of five cards: the black aces, the black eights, and a face-down hole card. He cannot use the deck in play, since the casino rules (naturally) prohibit any gaming equipment not provided by the house.

Also aboard (and hard to miss) is one Colonel Eugen Semyon, a mercenary commander with an infamous reputation for brutality. This reputation is fully justified, going back to his days as a Sword Worlds NCO — in fact, he is still called "Sergeant Semyon", but never to his face. Semyon is usually accompanied by his XO, Major Gunn (who is quiet and efficient but not a nice person either) and is always surrounded by an "honor guard" of four to six hardcases, in mesh-lined jackets. The liner's crew doesn't like Semyon's presence, but can do nothing about it as long as he breaks no laws.

Semyon's unit is not aboard, though at meals he will be seen discussing plans with Major Gunn. If one of the players is bold/crazy enough to ask for employment, there will be a −4 DM to the reaction roll, with a negative result meaning that two of the guards will be sent around to rough up the applicant when the crew isn't watching.

A few days into the trip, either just before or after jump, one of the poker players, Dolby, will suggest a "friendly", unsupervised game is his stateroom. Prester will accept; the player(s) may accept or decline as they wish.

At this game, Dolby will discover that he has forgotten to pack a deck of cards, and Prester will bring out his souvenir deck. Midway through the second or third hand, Dolby will look closely at the cards, and announce that they are marked. Very rapidly, he will draw a body pistol and pump several tranq rounds into Prester, then gather up the cards, explaining that he is a ship's security officer who has been waiting for evidence that the sergeant-major was a cheat. He will ask that everyone remain in the room until he can bring back other ship's security officers to take Prester in-

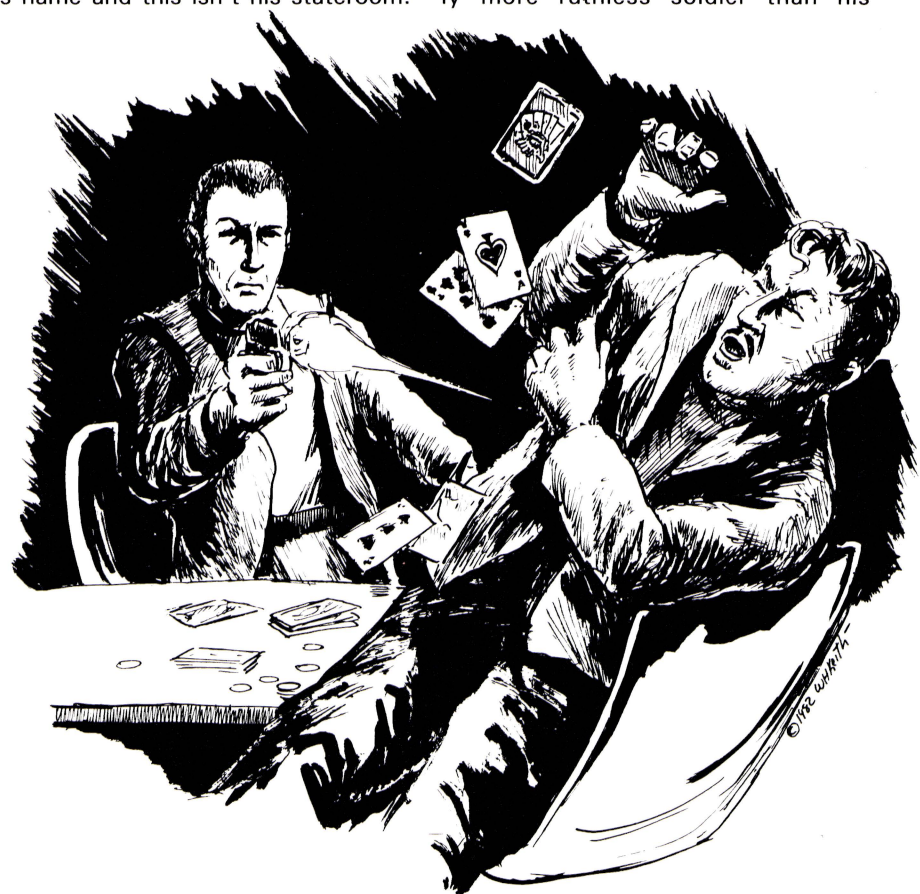
to custody. Dolby will then attempt to leave, alone, before anyone can fully react.

If Dolby is allowed to leave, he will never be seen again aboard ship (he will steal a ship's boat and make his escape) and it will very soon be discovered that one of the "tranquilizer" rounds was actually loaded with nerve toxin, and Sgt-Major Prester is extremely dead. (Only Dolby's first shot was poisoned; the rest are conventional tranqs, and he will not hesitate to shoot anyone trying to prevent his departure.)

Dolby is not, of course, with Firenze Ltd., but with Colonel Semyon; he is a professional killer turned the Colonel's "Special Security Officer"; Dolby isn't his name and this isn't his stateroom. The NPCs in the room will guess something is amiss when Prester is discovered to be dead, Dolby fails to return, or the person whose room key "Dolby" stole returns. If the players are a little slow in picking up on any of this, one of the NPCs can help them out. If no player-character was in the game, consider having "Dolby" bump into one of them on his way to steal the boat.

Semyon and company are headed for a world one stop after *Domine Allegro's* next: Malefolge (B-787699-7, Amber) — which happens to be the site of the 1188th's destruction.

Colonel Semyon was hired several months ago as a striker in a military coup d'etat on Malefolge; a better and certainly more ruthless soldier than his



employers, he soon became the de facto ruler of the inhabited areas.

Then he learned of two local legends: that the Aces and Eights were destroyed by a biowar attack by their supposed local allies, the same men who hired the colonel; and (of much more interest) that a complete quarterly payroll for the brigade, Cr20,000,000, was delivered just before the sneak attack. The rumor says that the brigade's survivors (troops like Prester, who were on patrol or detached duty at the time of the attack) hid the money in the mountains.

Semyon located the survivors of the 1188th who still lived on Malefolge, had them "removed", and handed them over to Dolby. Despite Dolby's considerable skill in questioning, he learned very little: only that the deck of cards is somehow the key to locating the money. Semyon is not certain how to use the cards, but he has plenty of time to find out, unless the players interfere.

The black aces and eights in the deck contain radiopaque inserts that will show up as black lines in an x-ray picture. Meaningless separately, when the four cards are stacked with the backs aligned, the lines will overlay into a map.

The map is incomplete, however. A fifth "hole card" is needed which is not in Prester's deck.

The fifth card, a joker, is in the possession of the one survivor on Malefolge Semyon does not know of: Captain Fell, the 1188th Intelligence Officer, who designed the plan to hide the money. He has completely changed his identity (and his fellow soldiers died without betraying him). He is deeply involved in an underground movement to free Malefolge from dictatorship in general, and now Colonel Semyon in particular. The money would be helpful in the movement, and Fell sent a signal several months ago calling the card-carrier in. It was his bad luck that 1) Semyon learned too much, and 2) ownership of the deck passed to someone as careless as Prester (not Fell's original choice).

The original offer of employment by Firenze Ltd. was legitimate. Remember that the free passage extends only to the next stop; passage to Malefolge must be arranged/paid for by the players, and Firenze Ltd. will not be eager to have them on the *Domine Allegro* (which carries no low passengers) after Sgt-Major Prester's murder, for which the group may be held as material witnesses.

Other problems include leaving Malefolge Starport without the notice of Semyon's police; making contact with Captain Fell and the Malefolge underground; and getting MCr20 out of the mountains and past the Colonel's forces.

A final note: if the players do not make a profit gambling aboard ship, it will probably occur to them to conceal some of their chips and claim to have lost them, then cash them in at some other Firenze Ltd. shipboard or dirtside casino.

Every chip contains a printed tracer circuit. Chips carried off the ship pass through an electronic field that destroys this circuit; inerted chips cannot be cashed. (Present day casinos mark any gambling equipment carried out as souvenirs, to prevent its being altered for cheating purposes.)

Any player who is gambling-3 or better will know of this system, and know better than to try and beat it. Nonprofessionals should be allowed to try, with appropriate results.

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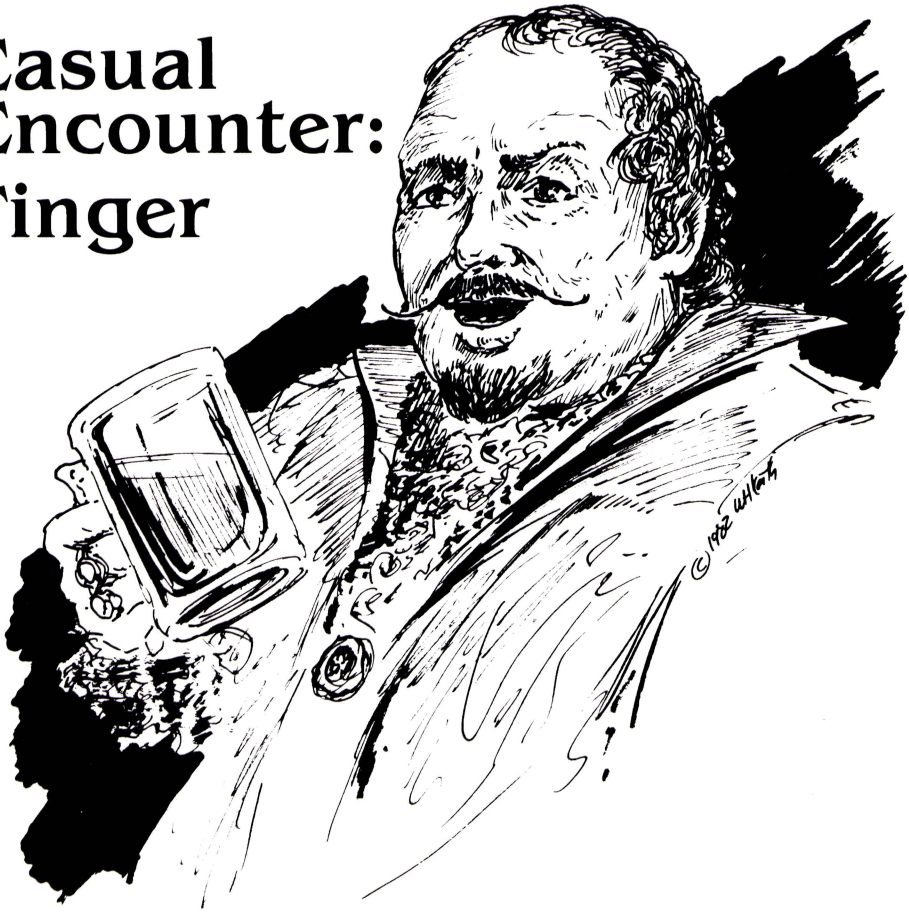
# Casual Encounter: Finger




Free Trader
Lothario Lochinvar Finger
A8DA56 Age 54(?) 9 terms(?) Cr0 (see below)
Brawling-3, Carousing-3, Liaison-3, Streetwise-3, Trader-4

Finger (what everyone calls him; he claims to mistrust people who call him "mister") is, at first glance, the very prototype of the Falstaffian, jolly-good-fellow star trader, and he likes to project exactly that image. Actually, he is a bit more than just a good drinking buddy.

Little is known of his early career, except that it was spent in free traders. His homeworld, wherever it was, was a high-G planet, and most of Finger's stoutness is muscle, not fat – which a number of bullies have found out the hard way. He is rumored to have been a captain/owner, but he never shows valid papers. It is said he is a runaway prince, a powerful psionic, a disgraced admiral, even the emperor incognito. Finger laughs good-humoredly at all these suggestions.

He has been just about everywhere, it seems, as far as a man can go in 54 years (though that may not be his actual age), but he does not travel much anymore, preferring to settle down at a comfortable class A starport for an ex-

tended period. During this time he will constantly be arranging complicated deals, some of which are, for all practical purposes, swindles. When encountered – probably in a port or startown bar – he will treat the players as old friends. Everybody is Finger's old friend until proven otherwise. And at the first opportunity he will try to entangle them is his latest plot, which he is sure will bring them terrific profits on any money they care to invest.

It is not so much that Finger is a pathological liar—he isn't—as he is a pathological optimist; he cannot help but overestimate the payoff from a deal, including the chance of getting back your original stake.

Yet he is extremely moral. He hates to see people hurt, and will never knowingly take a person's last credit; he has never swindled anyone who couldn't well afford it (and didn't well deserve it). About the only things that can genuinely anger him are plans to ruin people—especially by taking a captain's ship—and unnecessary cruelty (and Finger is old enough to know that sometimes it is necessary, and wise enough to know the difference).

Finger never has any money of his own, having either spent it on a new "goodie" (see below) or given it away, but most regular starport—and even startown—establishments will feed and shelter him on "open-ended credit" (this does not extend to companions). He is a TAS member but rarely uses the facilities except for the benefit of nonmember friends. And an astonishing assortment of people owe him favors. (Including, rumor has it, the emperor. Well, maybe. Remember Shakespeare's Henry IV, Part 2.)

Finger's primary interest—"my sinful delight" he calls it—is the acquisition of what he calls "goodies": one-of-a-kind items with unusual properties. Specific goodies have included:

— A deck of cards printed in electrostatic image ink, capable of changing their faces in response to a pocket control box.

— The brick: a sealed, ultra-efficient gravity generator, roughly the size and appearance of an ordinary building brick, that when included in a shipment of goods, could alter the weight by several tons plus or minus. (This adventure was, of course, called "Finger on the Scales.")

— A leather wine bota, made from the hide and gut of some unknown animal, that metabolized any wine put in it into a delicious and very intoxicating brandy. (Used to help an Imperial spy escape the Tavrchedle' just before the war, by getting the Zhodani secret police chief and several of his henchmen drunker than poleaxed mules.)

Finger never manages to keep a goodie for very long, and nobody ever finds out where they come from, where they go, and least of all, how to duplicate them. (Another rumor about Finger's origin says he is actually an ancient, immortal, secret agent of some vast social Plan. Finger's response to this is to search his hair for signs of grey, saying "does it show?", or to do a Droyne impersonation that always brings down the house.)

Finger wears bright, even loud colors, but never dresses in bad taste. Underneath the flashy outfit is a custom-tailored suit of cloth/reflec combination armor, though for obvious reasons he does not advertise the fact. He does not like to go armed — and considering the way he punches, he doesn't usually have to.

One last ability that he will not mention, because he's not fully aware he has it: Finger's mind cannot be read. Anyone who tries gets a broadband stream of trivia: disconnected visiphone numbers,

*continued on page 48*

# Languages in Traveller

A word innocently uttered in a tavern conversation triggers a major brawl . . . a merchant suddenly becomes insulted and cancels a profitable trading deal . . . a squad of soldiers fails to open fire at a critical moment and a battle is lost.

These and other disasters can result from misunderstandings caused by dialect and language differences as adventurers journey from world to world and interact with the local populations.

## LANGUAGES OF THE IMPERIUM

Galanglic, a dialect of Anglic, is the official language of the Imperium. This tongue, which corresponds in many ways to today's general American dialect, is usually widely spoken as a first language only by the general population of major worlds on communications and trade routes.

On other worlds, Galanglic will be spoken to a lesser degree by the local population as a second language. Their first language will either be a different anglic dialect or a totally foreign language. In any case, the more isolated a given world is from trade and communications routes, the more difficult it will be for a visiting adventurer to understand the planet's dominant language. Likewise, the locals will have greater difficulty understanding the adventurers — compounded by the provincial suspicion some isolated societies have for outsiders.

Balkanized worlds may have more than one language spoken among their countries, depending on the world's cultural history. These can be generated by dice throws (see "exceptions" section on balkanized worlds, below), or imposed by the referee.

Note here that we are referring to the general population of a world; the people who live in the hinterland away from the starport. Government officials, starport workers, and merchants in the major population center around the starport will have a working knowledge of Galanglic, and a party of adventurers should have little language trouble.

If, however, your characters trek across country to purchase a shipment of rare herbs from a village merchant on a backwater agricultural planet, a lack of knowledge of the local language could definitely be a problem.

The effects of language in **Traveller** will show up in modifications to the NPC encounter reaction throw as discussed in **Traveller** Book 3.

Characters will receive a "fluency bonus" of a +1 die roll modification to the NPC encounter reaction throw if this encounter occurs on their homeworld, in their home nation.

This bonus is lost when characters leave home, and can only be regained for another world or nation if they take language lessons and become fluent in another world's tongue. (See below.)

On other worlds, characters can suffer a language ignorance penalty of from 0 to −3 on the encounter die roll. This penalty is greatly influenced by the tech level of the world, whether it is located on an x-boat route, and the class of the world's starport.

The tech level is an important factor because it reflects the communications and transportation technology available to the local population. The more sophisticated communications systems available on the world, the more easily a widely understood dialect spoken by the interstellar community can be disseminated among and understood by the general population.

A high level of trade and communication between worlds will help prevent the deterioration of the general interstellar dialect spoken on these worlds into more localized and difficult to understand dialects or separate languages.

Starport class designations reflect the frequency of ship traffic carrying cargo, passengers, and information. The more traffic, the greater the need for the world to speak the common interstellar language, and the less trouble adventurers will have communicating with the local population. Worlds located on x-boat routes will have more frequent communications with the interstellar community, which will enhance the use and maintenance of Galanglic on these worlds.

Therefore, when your characters venture to new worlds, check the language matrix included with this article. Cross reference the world's tech level with its starport classification. The result will be either a zero or the language penalty die roll modifier for any encounter throws on that world. If the world is on an x-boat route, add a +1 modifier. However, unless the characters are fluent in the worlds languages or on their home world, the modifier cannot be greater than zero.

Modifiers range from −1 to −3. The first would represent a difference in dialect roughly analogous to the difference between American English and British English. A DM −2 represents a more radical dialect difference. Imagine a Texan speaking with a Liverpudlian, or a Georgia hillbilly speaking with a native of India and you'll get the idea. The −3 represents virtually a different language, akin to the difference between Spanish and Italian.

Even a DM −1 can cause misunderstandings. If an Australian were to call a Texan a "dinkum cobber", for instance, the reaction might be violent.

Aliens represent a special case. Within the Imperium, most aliens working and living in a metropolitan center would have a working knowledge of Galanglic. However, on alien dominated worlds, such as one of the Imperium's Aslan dominated worlds, the language DM would be an automatic −3. This automatic −3 DM applies to *all* aliens outside the Imperium, including Zhodani.

Mercenary or naval oriented adventurers will also find language differences affecting them.

Mercenary characters cannot apply their leadership skill level bonus to morale saving throws if commanding troops or advising a troop commander (possibly through an interpreter) that speaks a different dialect or language. Characters with tactics skill will also lose their bonus on rolls for surprise as described in Book 1 if commanding or advising a unit speaking a different language.

Orders may be misunderstood or not carried out in a *Striker* miniatures scenario. If a character is commanding or advising a unit that is not from his homeworld, he will be able to lead normally (as explained in the *Striker* rules). However, when he gives orders, he must roll 7+ on two dice for them to be understood and executed. The language DM that applies to the troops native world should be subtracted from this throw. If the commander fails the understanding throw, the troops must make a morale check as in the *Striker* rules. If they pass the morale check, they will hold their position and behave as low initiative troops regardless of their previous initiative rating until another attempt is made to either issue orders or lead them.

When playing naval campaigns using Book 5, *High Guard* characters who are naval commanders or ship captains lose their fleet or ship tactic skill levels if they are commanding a fleet or ship with a foreign-speaking crew. The language DM for the crew's native world should be subtracted from the "to hit" rolls made on gunnery tables to reflect the disruption in the chain of command caused by language problems.

On the plus side, merchant characters who have acquired skill in a world's foreign language earn a +1 DM when rolling for resale on the speculation table in Book 2.

## EXCEPTIONS

There are several exceptions to the general language penalty DM requirement:

*Starports:* Because people working at starports have so much contact with offworlders, most of them are fluent in Galanglic. Therefore, characters should disregard the language penalty DM for that world during an encounter inside a starport perimeter.

*Merchant Characters:* Characters who have served in the Merchant service for more than three terms gain a special +1 DM because of the familiarity they have gained with the languages and cultures of worlds where they frequently trade. This special merchant bonus is lost if the merchant character travels to a world outside his or her home subsector.

*Balkanized Worlds:* Because several different cultures may have evolved on balkanized worlds, or because different areas of balkanized worlds may have been settled by peoples of different ethnic backgrounds, several languages may be spoken on a balkanized world. The effects of this can be resolved either directly by the referee through his or her knowledge of the planet's history or political situation, or by rolling 1D−3 for each nation entered on a balkanized world, other than the nation where the starport is located. The "starport nation" will have the DM indicated on the language matrix.

## SKILLS

Certain skills give characters an advantage when dealing with people who speak a foreign language. These include:

*Liaison,* which reflects prior language training.

*Streetwise,* a skill that includes the ability to quickly pick up a rudimentary

knowledge of the local language and imitate the local accent so as to more easily get along and blend in with the native population.

*Broker,* (as described in the trade and commerce section of Book 2) applied to rolls on the purchase and resale price table. This skill is also available as part of the enhanced character generation system described in the *Merchant Prince* special supplement published in issue 12 of the *Journal*.

*Trader,* also as described in *Merchant Prince*.

In addition to any other previously described effect credited to the above skills, characters may subtract their Liaison, Streetwise, Broker, or Trader skill levels from the language penalty DM. (A −3 DM would become −1 if the character had Streetwise −2.)

## LEARNING LANGUAGES

Since learning a new language is a time consuming and expensive process, characters would probably undertake this for the few worlds they would need to visit frequently that have a −3 language DM and rely on interpreters or translators for other −3 worlds.

Languages must be acquired through study with a living or electronic tutor. This learning can be speeded up if the character totally immerses him or herself in the foreign culture and speaks only the new language.

Characters studying a language with a tutor for one hour a day plus reviewing and practicing alone for an additional hour each day will gain a rudimentary knowledge of a given language in six weeks and a working knowledge of a given language in six months. A rudimentary knowledge allows them to add a +1 DM to encounter rolls made on the specific planet where the language is spoken, while a working knowledge allows them to add a +2 DM.

Characters who study a language as outlined above for a year will become fluent on a roll of 6+ on 2D. Those who live in the society as well as study the language become automatically fluent within a year and acquire a working knowledge within three months because of their need to constantly use the language. Note, however, this cultural immersion is not enough to learn a new language; a teacher is also necessary.

Characters with an intelligence rating of 9+ can reduce the above language acquisition times by 25%.

Fluency eliminates all language barrier penalties and restores the "fluency bonus" on reaction throws.

*Teachers:* Language teachers are generally available for hire in or near major cities on worlds with a population factor of 5 or higher. Private tutoring is typically available for Cr20 an hour. Long term contracts or a class fee for a group of adventurers can be negotiated.

Language teaching computer programs for ship's computers using one point of CPU capacity are available at class A and B starports for worlds in the same subsector, and cost Cr100,000 These programs enable characters to use their ship's computer in place of a live teacher for their daily lessons. Single language programs are available on worlds with a tech level from 8 through 11. Multiple language programs capable of teaching up to six languages (priced at Cr75,000 per language) are available on worlds of TL12+.

Computers must be equipped with speech synthesis and voice recognition modules (TL9+) costing Cr50,000 before they can run language lesson programs.

*Translators:* Characters who do not have time to learn languages for visits to distant worlds may decide to employ translators instead. Humans or aliens

capable of translating the local planet's language and vice-versa fast enough so characters can hold a conversation with local inhabitants can be hired for Cr150 an hour. Translators who handle only written material can be hired for one third as much.

Language translation computer programs capable of handling written documents are available beginning with TL10. These cost Cr100,000 and take up one point of CPU capacity.

More complex translation programs capable of simultaneous translations between the character's language and one other are available at TL12. These take up two points of CPU capacity and cost Cr300,000. Computers running these programs must operate speech synthesis and voice recognition modules as described above, as well as have a communicator radio link if the translation is to take place at a remote location.

Multiple language programs are available at TL14, use one point of CPU capacity plus one for each language translated, and cost Cr500,000 plus Cr100,000 for each language.

Complete self-contained language translators are available at TL15 and cost Cr200,000. They weigh 1 kg and are worn as a belt or chest pack. Language memory chips are available separately for Cr1,000.

Self-contained translators are battery-powered and can run up to twelve continuous hours on one charge. The user wears a lightweight combination microphone/earphone headset, while a speaker and microphone in the translator pack transmits or receives in the native's language.

Characters expecting to deal with Hivers will have to acquire a special self-contained translator capable of converting human language to the Hiver's gesture "speech" and displaying these symbols on a self-contained screen.

Unless the Hiver has its own voder unit, the symbol translator will only enable the user to have a one-way conversation. Hiver symbol translators are available only on TL15 worlds, and cost Cr50,000.

## LANGUAGES

As mentioned earlier, Galanglic is the official language of the Third Imperium. It is a dialect of Anglic, a language that is descended from and pronounced quite a bit like Terran English, which had been the language of the Terran Confederation. Although English is the basis for Anglic, this language has absorbed words from French, German, Russian, Spanish, Japanese, Mandarin, and Vilani. The various dialects of Anglic were spread through Imperial space during the Rule of Man, and Galanglic was developed as an easily pronounced, easily understood general dialect.

Members of the Imperial armed forces are required to speak Galanglic in addition to their native dialect or language.

Galanglic is also the official language of the Solomani Confederation, and variants can be found spoken on worlds of the Darrian Confederation and among the Sword Worlds.

Other Terran descended languages are prominent on many Solomani settled worlds, particularly in the Solomani Rim sector and in the Solomani Confederation. These include Hispanic, Germanic, Slavic, Hindi, Hamitic, and Sino-tibetan languages, in addition to various other tongues carried to the stars by the great waves of emigration from Earth during the Rule of Man. During these emigrations, many peoples left Earth in order to preserve their native cultures, and transplanted their culture and language intact to a new world where it has been preserved to this day. These are referred to as "pure ethnic" worlds, and have an automatic DM−3.

The dominant language on a given world can often be told from the world's name. As examples, Jarslav in the Albadawi subsector of the Solomani Rim is a slavic speaking world, while Kukulkan's inhabitants speak a variant of a Hispanic language. Examples of pure ethnic worlds include Vyborg, where Finnish is spoken; Oudh, inhabited by Arabic speakers; Thorwald, inhabited by German speakers; Basse Terre, inhabited by French speakers; and Zhongguo, which was originally settled by Mandarin Chinese speakers.

There is another major language spoken in Imperial space that has roots older than the various forms of Anglic. This language is Vilani (the official language of the First Imperium), spoken as a first language on Vilani settled worlds.

A general dialect known as High Vilani is spoken in addition to Galanglic by merchants and business people on most planets which were a part of the Vilani Imperium. Local Vilani-based dialects have developed on some of these worlds since they were settled during the first Imperium, and are used by the inhabitants as their everyday tongue. They bear roughly the same relationship to High Vilani as Spanish or French do to Latin.

**REFEREE'S NOTE**

There are many ways language differences can be used to spice up an adventure. These differences can be a fine vehicle to inject uncertainty and confusion when a campaign has been running too smoothly. Conversely, characters who take the time and meet the expense of learning foreign dialects and languages can be richly rewarded through successful trade deals or by accomplishing diplomatic, political, or military missions where other less skilled individuals have failed.

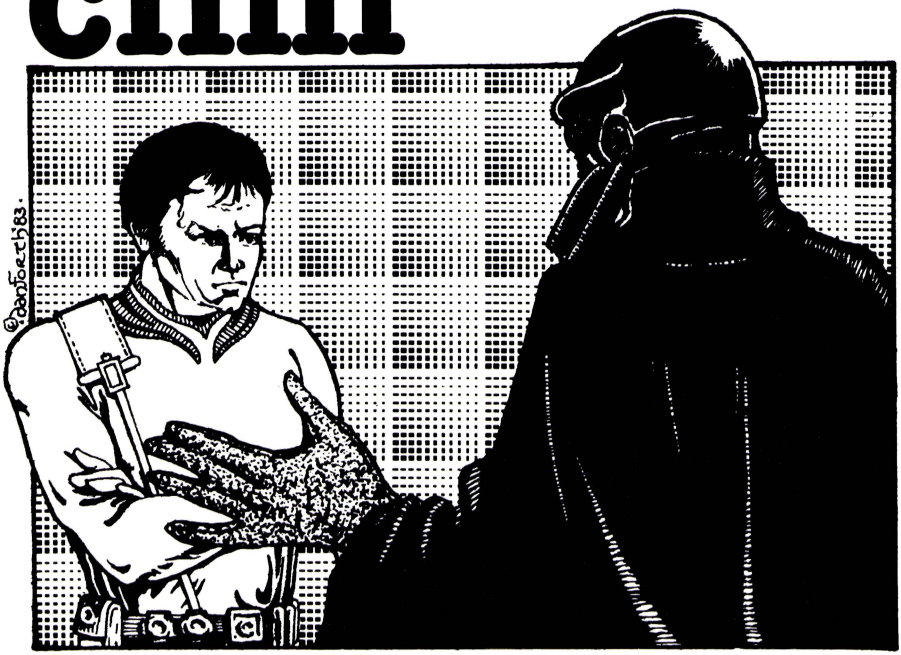
**LANGUAGE DM MATRIX**

| | *Starport type* | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Tech Level:* | *A* | *B* | *C* | *D* | *E* | *X* |
| F | 0 | 0 | −1 | — | — | — |
| E | 0 | −1 | −1 | −1 | −2 | — |
| D | −1 | −1 | −1 | −2 | −2 | — |
| C | −1 | −1 | −2 | −2 | −2 | — |
| B | −1 | −2 | −2 | −2 | −3 | — |
| A | −1 | −2 | −2 | −3 | −3 | −3 |
| 9 | −2 | −2 | −3 | −3 | −3 | −3 |
| 8 | −2 | −3 | −3 | −3 | −3 | −3 |
| 7 | −2 | −3 | −3 | −3 | −3 | −3 |
| 6 | — | −3 | −3 | −3 | −3 | −3 |
| 5 | — | −3 | −3 | −3 | −3 | −3 |
| 4 | — | — | −3 | −3 | −3 | −3 |
| 3 | — | — | −3 | −3 | −3 | −3 |
| 2 | — | — | — | −3 | −3 | −3 |
| 1 | — | — | — | −3 | −3 | −3 |
| 0 | — | — | — | — | −3 | −3 |

**Note:** If world on an x-boat route, DM + 1.

*— Terry McInnes*

# chill




# AMBER ZONE:

*Players' Information:*

The adventurers, after responding to an initial advertisement for work, are introduced to a person wearing a breathing mask and a black cloak: a services factor of indeterminate age, sex, and even species (well, not a Droyne or a Hiver, but other than that . . .).

The team is to accompany an unspecified cargo to its destination world, see that it is delivered safely, and return to the factor with the payment, whereupon they will receive 10% of the payment as fee for service. This will amount to Cr400,000.

It is made very clear that the team is not to tamper with or open the cargo, and even more clear that if they attempt to steal the payment and flee, they will be hunted down and killed in a most unpleasant fashion.

*Referee's Information:*

Should the players voice the obvious suspicions, the disguised factor will tell them that the cargo is a legal commodity everywhere in the Imperium, and its import to the destination is entirely legal.

Transport will be aboard a tramp freighter of the rustbucket variety. Accommodations are second class but clean and comfortable, and the crew is friendly . . . except for the captain, who is officious and surly and will expressly deny the players any access to the hold.

Sainte Foy (B-756733-7 Amber) is a rugged mining world, ruled by a hereditary clique descended from the earliest colonists: the Primacy. The standard of living is known to be high, due to large exports of ores, but Foyans are notoriously secretive and xenophobic. Ships landing outside the Gateway Starport have been met by armed parties, resulting in the Amber classification.

Gateway is in a box canyon with mountains on all sides. The weather on

landing is cool (10° C) and pleasant, calm, with cloudy but unthreatening skies.

When the cargo is off-loaded, it will be seen to consist of 10 tons of crates, loaded on three grav pallets. The crates are covered with blue plastic insulation, and carry no information other than an address and the notices *Keep Below 0°* and *Do Not Accept if Seal is Broken.*

The purchasing agent has been delayed, so the players will have a small amount of time to explore the starport. It is inhabited entirely by offworlders with no place better to go; Sainte Foy pays port employees well, since the Foyans do not themselves have to deal with offworlders. Another result is that the port staff are very little involved in Foyan life.

The local newspaper (assuming that the players ask to see one) has a black bordered box on the front page containing several multi-digit numbers. The staff can explain that this is some kind of lottery, open only to natives, but either do not know or will not say more than this.

The players must not leave the port; non-Foyans may not cross the extrality line without a passport issued by the Primacy — and no one with such authority is present.

Eventually a train will arrive carrying the purchasing agent, Count Ibraim Radge, one of the Primacy. He is accompanied by the A (Chrysolite) Platoon of the Sainte Foy Prime Guard: thirty picked soldiers equipped to tech 9. Radge is upset, impatient, and angry; wind shear in the mountains has grounded the helicopters that were supposed to receive the cargo, which must now travel by train.

While the Count has the payment (MCr4 in a briefcase with anti-theft devices), he will refuse to hand it over, saying that the contract is for delivery to the capital, Villefoix. The players may wait at the port until Radge returns to pay them, or they may accompany him to Villefoix as additional guards; if they do, they will be paid Cr100,000 cash, which need not be shared with the factor.

The ship captain's contract has expired, and he insists upon leaving now, with the players or without them. The troops will by now have taken possession of the cargo pallets, and will not give them up. Radge will add high passages home to his offer, and if the players are hesitant, more cash (becoming more impatient and angry by the moment). The absolute limit of his offer in cash and passage tickets is Cr250,000.

Assuming that the players accept, they will board a northbound train. The cargo pallets will be stowed in a baggage car.

Foyan trains are tech 7 design (steel wheels on welded steel rails) with fusion powered locomotives recently imported. The Count's special train consists of: an engine, two baggage cars, a coach/bunk car for the soldiers, a dining car, and an office/parlor car for the Count's use. The trip to Villefoix is 2,300 km; the train's average speed is 100 kph.

Once into the mountains around Gateway, Sainte Foy's true character will reveal itself, the temperature falling to −25° C, with persistent winds of at least 10 kph, gusting to 50+, and intermittent snow.

Two and a half hours into the trip, the train will stop at what appears to be a mountain lodge. The stopover will last two hours, during which Radge will not be seen. The players may enter the lodge — at which there are no other guests — take hot showers, patronize the bar, and so forth; they will learn nothing at all about the place other than its use being reserved for the primacy.

When the Count appears at reboarding, his impatience and irritation will be

miraculously gone. When the train pulls out, the general mood will be improved; everyone will begin to relax.

If the cargo is inspected, the players will find one ton of crates has been removed. (If the team tries to keep a guard with the pallets at all times during the layover, some means must be found to distract him or her; the offer of hot soup in the dining car while a Chrysolite stands watch, for instance.) The Count will cheerfully ignore any protests over this, pointing out that he is carrying the 4 million, and demanding some good faith in return.

The train will never reach its destination (bet you guessed that already). Shortly after midnight, the tracks will be sabotaged ahead and behind, forcing an emergency stop, and a guerrilla force will launch an ambush from the trackside woods.

The ambushers are poorly equipped (tech 5-6, no weapons heavier than a light machine gun or single shot RPGL) and the attack will almost certainly succeed in nothing but permanently stopping the train and picking off a few of the accompanying troops.

The guerrillas will not surrender, and the Chrysolites will take no prisoners. If the players manage to capture a guerrilla, they will reveal no information and will die within an hour. If available, medical analysis will reveal that the guerrillas had all taken a hemolytic poison—before they launched their attack.

Guerrillas carry no identification, naturally, but all wear a small silver medallion, showing a heart impaled on a crown of thorns.

The Count will attempt to call for assistance, only to discover that all long-range communicators (including the players', if any) have been sabotaged beyond repair.

There is only one viable option: leave the train and move cross-country. Three vehicles are available: two snowcats (4-passenger tracked vehicles with some weather protection) and a halftrack with skis (driver and passenger in an enclosed cab; 8 persons/4 tons load in the truck bed). The cargo pallets have a total capacity of 15 tons (5 each), 9 of which are taken by the crates. The pallets may be towed by a vehicle or pushed by two walking men (i.e., they are not air/rafts). The Chrysolites will not abandon their wounded under any circumstances, and will not leave their dead unless absolutely forced to (first burying their bodies, stripped of anything the guerrillas might dig up and use).

**Facts:** The Primacy of Sainte Foy suffer from a hereditary anemia, requiring infusions of blood every two weeks. The cargo consists of 20,000 units of frozen human whole blood, about a year's supply for the entire Primacy. Count Radge's initial nervousness was due to his being near his infusion

*continued on page 40*

# Thought waves

*Players' Information:*
At the outbreak of the Fifth Frontier War, a small team of archeologists from Weishaupt University was investigating an unusual underwater site on the frontier world Kehaan (X-8A9000-0), an uninhabited planet in the 899-076 system. After the Zhodani incursion, Kehaan was within Consulate-controlled space and assumed captured.

As the world is of little strategic importance and only seven Imperial citizens

## AMBER ZONE:

are involved, the authorities have declined to help; the university is therefore

seeking a small commando force to rescue the scientists and their data.

It is made quite clear that the mission, while perhaps not illegal in the strictest sense, is not sanctioned by the Imperium. The payment, on success only, will be Cr500,000 for the data and Cr100,000 for each of the scientists recovered alive.

*Referee's Information:*

If the players do not have a starship available, a scout and pilot will be provided from the service reserve (the result of some string-pulling by the university). The pilot must be paid an equal share of any reward; he is taking at least an equal risk.

Kehaan Site One is a kilometer offshore from one of Kehaan's several large islands, under 40 meters of water. A field station, consisting of some pressurized shelters connected by tube corridors, has been set up on the sea floor; access to land is by submersible ATV (see *Journal* 12, page 7). A modular cutter with ATV module is parked on the island; it is empty (remember that Kehaan's atmosphere is unbreathable).

Outside the field station, sealed electric floodlights illuminate the site proper: a three-level step-pyramid, glossy black and featureless except for one entry corridor.

This corridor leads in and up to a half-flooded room, where the researchers change from wetsuits to coveralls. The air within is slightly thin but breathable.

The site interior is a maze of corridors and rooms, lit very dimly by reddish ceiling strips; the scientists have brought in generator lights, though only enough to light a small fraction of the structure at one time.

The two lower levels of the site have been explored in some detail. They contain what appear to be laboratories and spacious living quarters. All the accessible machinery is inert, corroded solid, and nothing organic remains; the archeologists guess that the pyramid has been unoccupied for at least three thousand years. No means of access have been found to the top level, from inside or out.

The Zhodani occupied Kehaan without a fight, as one might expect, given the opposition. On landing, however, an over-eager gunnery officer caused the destruction of the expedition's submersible ATV, with two persons, Drs. Chang and Wexler, aboard. The wreck has not been located, but a sweep by ship's boat failed to find survivors.

To make amends for this accident, and because the Zhodani commander was favorably impressed with the honesty and seriousness of the university team — plus the fact that the Consulate considers Kehaan no more important than the Imperium does. The archeologists were permitted to continue their work, under the supervision of a small security detachment, while the fleet moved on. Obviously, the Imperials are disarmed and denied access to their ship.

The security section consists of eight ship's troops, lightly armed and armored and competent in underwater operations, and two Intelligence officers. Both officers are intendents, and officer/interrogators: Captain Chizhiliepr, telepath of strength 10, and Lieutenant Shvetiepr, telepath and clairvoyant of strength 9. They were landed by ship's boat, which is parked and anchored on the sea floor near the field station (recall that streamlined *Traveller* spacecraft are by definition submarines).

Captain Chizhiliepr is aware that this assignment, while in some ways trivial, is in others a test for him; he hoped to co-exist as smoothly as possible with the Imperials, returning to regular duty with a good report—and some valuable archeological data.

That was the situation when the station was captured two months ago. Since then, matters have become strained. The two Zhodani officers have received psionic emanations of an unfamiliar sort, causing them headaches and other discomforts. When questioned, all the scientists denied psychic abilities (with some distaste, in fact).

Finally, after a particularly severe episode, the officers probed the five scientists—Drs. Higher and Benda requiring physical restraint, Dr Benda breaking a trooper's arm in the process—without results. Yet the broadcasts continue. Shvetiepr has attempted clairvoyance of the top level of the site, but is blocked.

It is clear to the Captain that the pyramid contains some kind of psionic mechanism—and equally clear that it must not fall into Imperial hands. Yet none of the scientists appears to be actively involved. And if Chizhiliepr evacuates the site, it will appear in his record that he could not keep rein on a handful of unarmed civilian . . . deadheads.

He dares not probe again; forcible psychic invasion of non-combatants is against regulations. The first probe might be excused on the grounds of military security; a second cannot. Similarly, he cannot simply seize the scientist's data without some military reason. (He might find it difficult anyway; Dr Morningside keeps a tight watch on the cartridges. There are enough to fill two large briefcases; they are stored in a watertight cabinet in one of the station shelters.)

The Zhodani soldiers, aware of their officers' distress, are becoming nervous. The scientists, who are hardly superstitious, are starting to see and hear things in the darkness. It is only a matter of time until something snaps . . .

Facts: The structure is a planetary-survey starship, built by a now-extinct race of oxygen breathers from a dim red star. The lower levels contained complete facilities to gather and analyze specimens; much of the machinery was controlled psionically.

After the survey was complete, the top level—a complete starship—would detach and carry the complete crew and their information home; the lower pary is incapable of the return trip.

On this voyage, however, something happened to the crew, something very sudden and completely final. Now all that remain functional are the air refreshers, the glowstrips, and—in the top, sealed section—the flight systems and the ship's psionic control system (psicon).

When the submersible was blasted, Dr. Chang was killed; Dr. Wexler, in his wet suit and breathing rig, was swept out of the sinking hulk after sustaining a massive cranial trauma. Somehow, this injury put him "in tune" with the psicon, which guided him to the the ship and admitted him to the upper level. He spent the time since then learning what the psicon can teach him.

The psicon has a strong programmed impulse to return to its homeworld; because Dr. Wexler insisted on learning other things first, he is not yet capable of piloting the ship-level, but will be in a few more days.

Unfortunately, he may not live that long. Intracranial bleeding from his head injury is producing headaches and transient paralysis—which the psicon transmits to the Zhodani officers. Wexler becomes weaker and more confused after each attack; in lucid periods he realized that he will die without treatment, and he has on at least two occasions gone into the lower levels in search of help, only to become confused again and return. Pale, unkempt, bloody, in a torn white wetsuit, he could be anybody's idea of a ghost in the red

darkness; and if disoriented enough he might draw and use his sheath knife ...

This adventure does not have to be approached as a commando raid. The rescue party is not even necessary. The players might be the captive scientists, the Zhodani, or some of each.

No matter what the viewpoint, however, atmosphere is all-important (the reason this amber zone is more detailed and longer than usual). The players must keep tense and uncertain, in the fashion of a Gothic horror story. Surprise them; scare them if you can. Efforts to give the feeling of being in dark, haunted corridors, surrounded by a crushing sea, will be rewarded.

*continued on page 47*

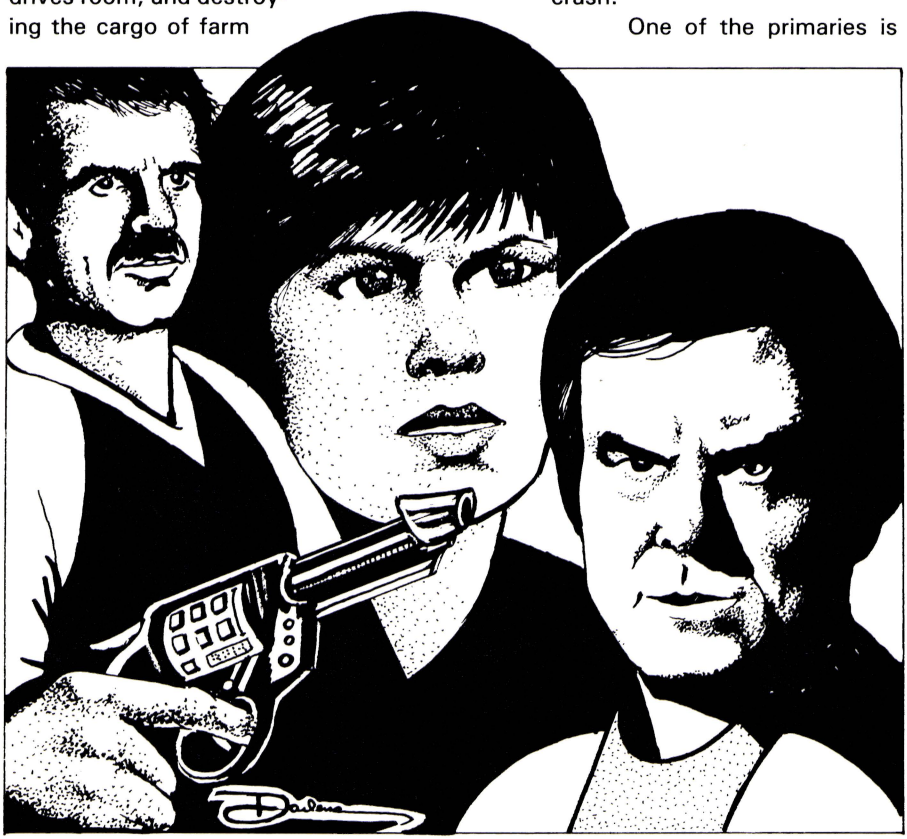
# LAST FLIGHT of the Themis

## AMBER ZONE:

*Players' Information:*

During a low-level night approach to Gwydion starport, the Highline Corporation free trader *Themis* (200 tons, see plans in supplement 7, *Traders and Gunboats*) crashed, killing all aboard except for one crewmember on duty in the drives room, and destroying the cargo of farm implements. Despite the unusual circumstances of the approach — so low as to be off Gwydion's approach radar, an illegal maneuver — the official inquiry reached a verdict of "blame not provable."The players are approached by representatives of a group of relatives of those killed in the *Themis* disaster. The group wishes to hire the players as guards, crew, or investigative help in a private inquiry into the causes of the crash.

One of the primaries is



the dead pilot's sister. She believes that the verdict of the inquest was reached hastily and cast doubts on her brother's reputation, which she wishes to clear. Another representative is the widower of a passenger; the third is a dead crewmember's cousin. Both of these are simply after the truth. The relative's organization has available a starship of the *Themis*'s class and apparently unlimited credit. They will pay normal salaries for the duration of the operation, plus all reasonable expenses. Double salaries will be paid if sufficient evidence is gathered to open a new official inquiry.

*Referee's Information:*

The facts in the crash of the *Highline Themis* are as follows:

The pilot was flying a dangerous approach because he was smuggling a small but highly valuable package. He planned to touch down and pass the parcel on before Gwydion control was quite aware that he had landed, claiming instrument failure for his violation of procedures.

However, during the tight and rapid maneuvers required (the flight path was strewn with boulders, some nearly twenty meters high) a worn bushing in the pilot's seat support (the result of poor maintenance) scraped a wire. The short caused a tiny electrical fire inside the seat. By itself, this fire would have been harmless, however, when exposed to heat, the upholstery material (Novyde synthetic leather) generated a colorless, toxic vapor. The gas made the pilot briefly dizzy — and before anyone on the bridge had time to notice, *Themis* was on the rocks.

The official inquest was in fact rushed. It is obvious to any pilot with experience in the "small package trade" (which is most of them) that *Themis'* pilot was indeed smuggling; the inconclusive, hasty verdict was brought to protect his reputation, not damage it.

The facts concerning the relatives are:

The organization is genuine. Its money comes from a few well-off members and from insurance payments. Credit is not unlimited, though the limits are fairly high; roughly Cr100,000 per single purchase. The ship is on loan from the Highline Corporation, and must be returned.

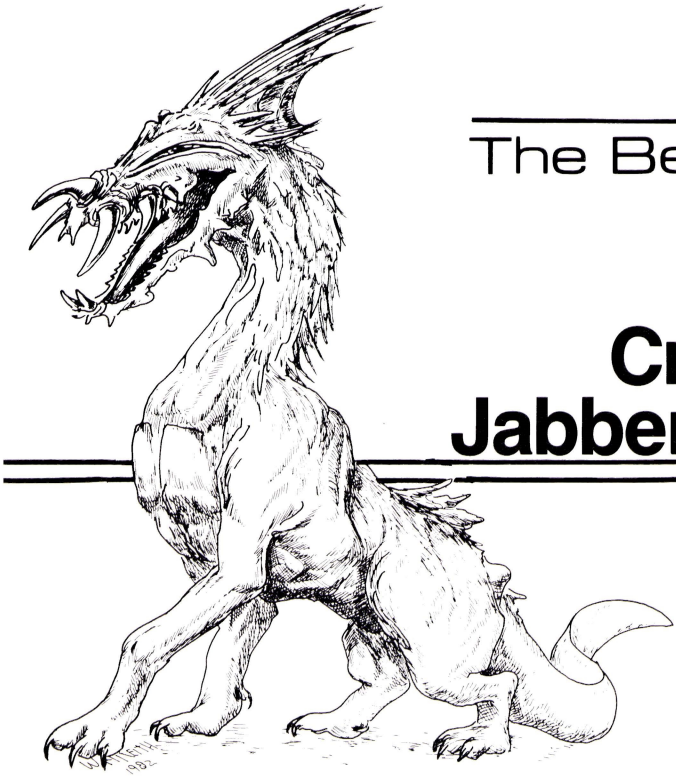
The three primaries all have secrets, however.

The pilot's sister is trying to recover the smuggled parcel. She will attempt to contact the sole crash survivor, who is now working at Gwydion starport. The survivor may or may not (at ref's option) know about the parcel; if so, the ex-crewmember will talk only to the sister, and only alone.

The sister was at one time an apprentice navigator, and is knowledgable about starships, and about smuggling and smugglers. She would in fact like to clear her brother's name, but it is definitely secondary to recovering the package.

The "cousin" is actually unrelated to any of the accident victims; he is a freelance industrial spy employed by Customform, LIC, the maker of the dangerous upholstery material. Only a small, faultily synthesized batch of Novyde is hazardous, and no other accidents have been reported; the company cannot know with certainty that it was responsible in this case, but their spy is to find out and, if so, cover up the fact. The spy hates violence, and in fact is rather cowardly, though he can handle guns; he will prefer tactics such as hiring thugs to scare off or rough up team members (he has Cr20,000 cash available for this, bribes, and so on). He will not kill or order killing unless his own life is in danger, and even then will try bribery first.

*continued on page 36*



# The Bestiary

# Crested Jabberwock

**Crested Jabberwock**
*(Jabberwockiscristatus saevitia)*

Sometimes called the nightclaw, or the fanged death, the Crested Jabberwock is a medium-sized carnivore native to Kassan (Vega 0101 A-785757-E) in the Solomani Rim. Only a few members of the species have been transported offworld.

Fully grown Jabberwocks mass about 400 kgs. They are bilaterally symmetrical, homeothermic quadrupeds, standing about 1.2 meters tall at the shoulder and measuring some 2.6 meters in length. Their anatomy is unusual in that the animal has four two-chambered hearts.

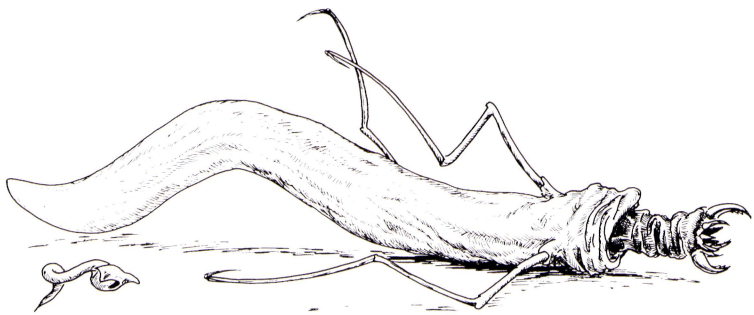
The Crested Jabberwock is noted for its magnificent, multi-colored crest, which is used in displays of territorial aggression and courtship. This gorgeous crest is highly prized by hunters and trophy collectors throughout the Solomani Rim, and have made the animal a highly prized and much-sought-after target. In as much as the Crested Jabberwock is one of the most aggressive carnivores known in modern exobiology (they have been known to attack prey five times their size), the challenge of Jabberwock hunting has long been considered the ultimate proof of courage and skill in some circles.

The Crested Jabberwock, unfortunately, has not proved a match for the inevitable march of civilization. Over the centuries, the inhabitants of Kasaan have sought to extend the world's agricultural production into new areas; they have ruthlessly sought to eliminate

the carnivore to protect fields and livestock. This, even more than the depredations of trophy hunters, has caused a massive decline in numbers. The species was recently placed upon the endangered species list maintained by the Pan-Galactic Friends of Life, an organization which has set out to protect the Crested Jabberwock from further decline. Their efforts have been quite successful to date, with the establishment of wilderness preserves on Kasaan and the passage of strict laws against Jabberwock hunting being among the most important triumphs achieved.

A solitary hunter, the Jabberwock stakes out a territorial claim over an area several kilometers square, and tolerates others of its kind within that area only during a relatively brief rutting season each year. Jabberwocks are ferocious, and kill their prey through a combination of their long slashing claws and sharp fangs. A Jabberwock is rarely satisfied; even when freshly fed, they take great delight in stalking and killing prey.

Adventures can easily be built around this unusual and dangerous creature. Parties might become involved in illegal hunts for the beast (either they personally can decide to hunt it, or they may be hired by a patron who needs an escort for the hunt). They might be attached to a scientific expedition studying the rare carnivore in its natural habitat (a very dangerous task). Finally, an organization such as the Pan-Galactic Friends of Life may hire the adventurers to look into violations of the Jabberwock protection laws.



**Doyle's Eel**

*(Ferrosolvens et al)*

Typical of a large number of metal-dissolving species discovered in various parts of the Imperium and its neighbors, Doyle's Eel is a creature which has proved to be at best a nuisance, and at worst a serious danger to ships operating in deep space. Animals of this general type have evolved on many planets independently, and have since spread far and wide as they are carried by the ships they invade and infest.

An adult eel measures approximately one-third of a meter in length, with a diameter averaging ten centimeters. They are hermaphroditic in nature, with all individuals capable of laying eggs. In their natural environments, the eels seek out veins of metal ore in underground

caverns, using a powerful acid secreted from organs located in their ventral surfaces to carve a protected nest into the rock. The eggs are deposited here. The adult remains in the nest until the eggs hatch, after which it usually dies.

The eggs hatch to produce larvae, which require up to a year of nearly constant feeding before they enter a metamorphic stage and emerge as small adults. The adults continue to eat and grow until mating; once the animal lays its eggs and begins standing vigil, it stops eating — eventually starving to death.

Doyle's Eel is a silicon-based life form which ingests metals — especially iron, tin, copper, or zinc. By bathing these metals in acid solutions, they generate a weak electrical current, upon which they live (the exact process is ill-understood, and still under study). They pose a triple danger to humans directly — powerful jaws (which have been known to shear a two centimeter copper tube), a powerful electric jolt, and a strong acid secretion (which has no effect on the eel itself because the various organs which store and secrete these acids are complex "organic ceramics" not affected by the acid).

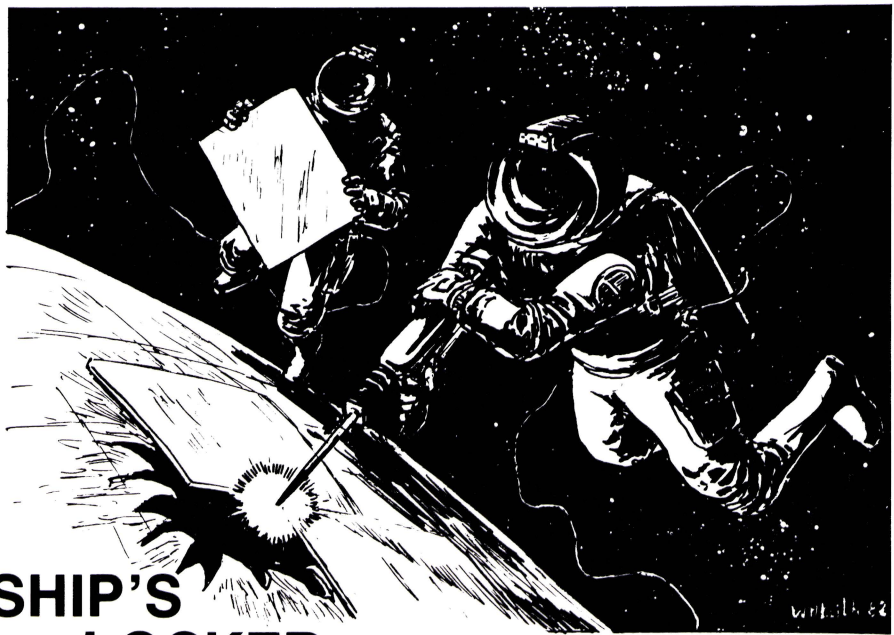
Their greatest threat to humans, however, is indirect. If an eel should get aboard a ship and lay eggs, that ship can face a severe problem. Once larvae are hatched, these tiny nuisances are likely to get almost anywhere — and have a special desire for silicon, some plastics, and other elements of shipboard electronics, computer, and avionics systems (to build up their body tissue). A ship infested with these creatures will suffer from numerous electrical breakdowns, often at critical points, as the larvae reach sensitive parts of the ship.

Elimination of the larvae from an infested ship is no easy matter. Their biochemical reactions are powered by electricity, not oxidation and they have no need of oxygen. They thrive in all atmosphere types except none, and can live for a surprisingly long time in vacuum. Temperature has little effect, and there are no known poisons that can eliminate them. Several methods are effective against these pests, including salt water, certain acids, and expensive viral diseases, but these do the ship's circuitry little good. Often an infestation ends with a ship given a major overhaul — equivalent in cost and time to three annual maintenance calls in one lump. All of these treatments assume, of course, that the ship makes planetfall.

Doyle's Eel (and similar species) are not usually picked up under routine conditions. Carefully enforced quarantines and cargo inspections have made the chances of picking up an infestation relatively rare in normal commerce. Most often, an infestation takes place as a result of an adult getting on board a ship grounded in a wilderness area on a planet

*continued on page 44*

| *Animal* | | *Weight* | *Hits* | *Armor* | *Wounds & Weapons* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Jabberwock | 400kg | 2/0 | Jack | 22 | Claws & teeth | A3 | F9 | S2 |
| 3D | Doyle's Eel, Larvae | .1kg | 4/0 | battle | 1 | as laser rifle | F5 | A8 | S2 |
| 1 | Doyle's Eel, Adult | 2kg | 10/0 | battle | 15 | as laser rifle | F5 | A6 | S1 |



# SHIP'S LOCKER

**Torches & Welding Equipment**

Used primarily in metalworking and similar fabrication and/or repair work, torches of various kinds will be of interest to **Traveller** players in two basic ways. First, they may be important to some repair or replacement work required for a ship. Secondly, they may be used as weapons if the party is attacked while they are near at hand. Out of the great variety of these tools available, the following are typical:

**Acetylene Torch**: A 300mm long chemically-fueled torch good for small repair jobs and spot welding. Fed by a one-liter tank of pressurized, flammable gas, the torch can be used for 10-30 minutes continuously, depending on the intensity of the heat produced. In combat, it can only be used at close range, attacking as a laser carbine, but receiving no modifiers due to skills or dexterity, and causing only 3D damage. *Weight:* 3kg. *TL:* 6. *Price:* Cr150. Refills for the tank cost Cr50 each.

**Laser Welder**: Similar in size and power output to a laser rifle, the welder is more ruggedly constructed, but of far less utility as a weapon. The laser welder is a semi-portable unit designed for major repair work. The internal power pack is good for 100 minutes of continuous use at standard output, or about 25 minutes of intense use. After this a recharge is required; or the unit can be hooked by adapter cables to a starship or groundside power source for unlimited use. The high setting is normally used for hull repair and other major work. Treat the unit as a laser rifle in combat, without favorable dexterity or skill modifiers. It cannot be used at greater than short range. The laser welder is 1 meter x .75 meters x .75 meters. *Weight:* 20 kg. *TL:* 8. *Price:* Cr6000.

**Portable Laser Welder**: A 1250mm long, lightweight version of the laser welder, the portable unit is similar in many ways. It does not, however, use an internal power pack; it is designed to be powered from a standard laser rifle backpack power source, a feature that

makes it a favored tool, for starship crews loathe to carry a multitude of different pieces of equipment and power sources. Standard power settings keep the welder in operation for 25 minutes; full output uses up power within 5 minutes. It cannot be linked to outside generators. Performance is similar to the welder when used in combat, but treat it as a laser carbine. The weight given below does not include the weight of the power pack.

*Weight:* 8kgs. *TL:* 9. *Price:* Cr4,000.

The metalwork set described in Book 3 normally carries either an acetylene torch or a portable welder (depending upon tech level and other considerations). Most dockyards will be furnished with laser welders, as will ships encountered on patrol or rescue work. Laser welders are not restricted by local law level, but it is highly unlikely that a person could walk down the street carrying one without attracting the attention of the authorities.

When repair work involving welding is required, the referee should determine the extent of the repairs the length of time needed to complete them. Laser welders (of either kind) do not fire in pulses; they will be switched on continuously as long as the power source lasts, or switched off by a fairly complicated safety switch. Protective goggles or welding masks (or eye-protection gear designed for hostile environment work) are recommended for use with welding equipment.

— *J. Andrew Keith*

*continued from page 31*

The widower's late wife was in the bridge-deck stateroom. The man is a top security officer for Highline Corporation, who pulled strings to get himself assigned to this job (which is supposed to be covering up for the spaceline, which knows its maintenance is substandard).

This man has been in military intelligence and private security for over thirty years, and has a powerful sense of duty overriding his grief. However: if he comes to believe, correctly or not, that any identifiable person or persons caused his wife's death, he will kill them without compunction. He is an expert with all small arms and in unarmed combat, as well as the usual security/intelligence skills.

This situation is obviously highly complicated and can move in many different directions. There are potentials for blackmail, loot, hijacking, etc. Other members of the relative's group may be added to provide skills the players lack and act as red herrings. The wreck of *Themis* may be virtually as it was after the crash, or picked clean by salvagers.

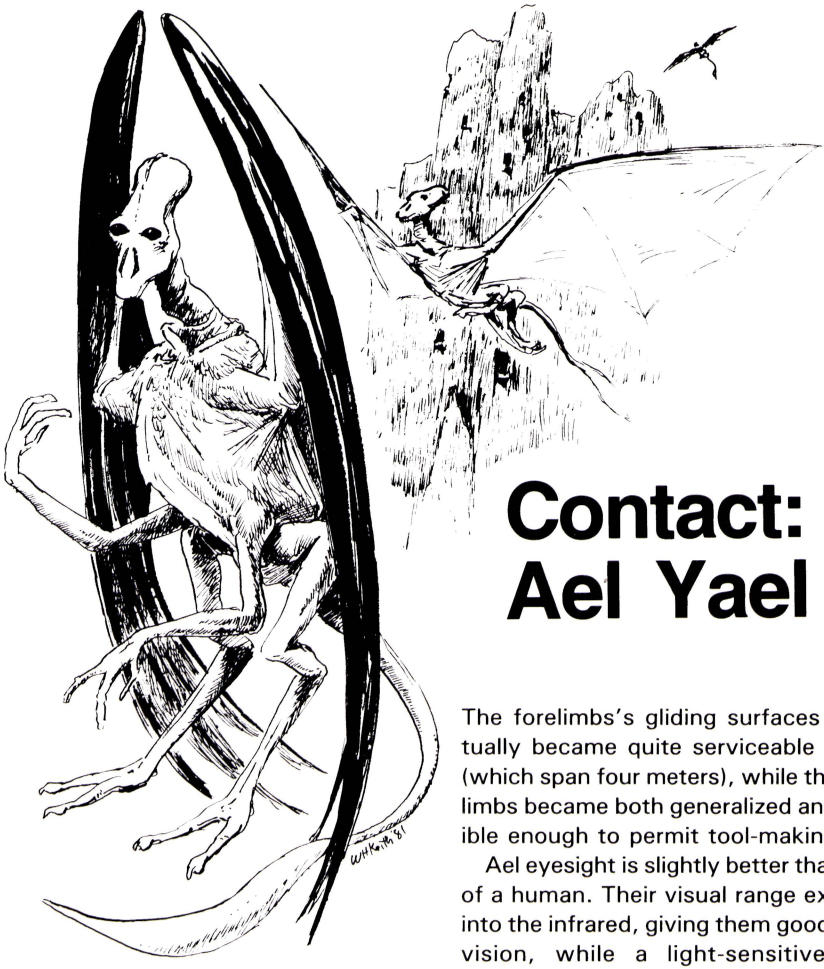
(During the test of this scenario, the players used their ship to duplicate the last flight of the *Themis*, as in Ernest K. Gann's *Fate is the Hunter.)*

Other possibilities include local criminal gangs after the parcel, and members of the board of inquiry covering for themselves.

Avoid the temptation to have the widower go berserk; keep him under control. If he does slip towards madness, he should become careless in proportion.

Actually acquiring enough evidence to reopen the inquest is not likely to please anyone without secret motives — and perhaps even them, since a "lost while smuggling" verdict might cost them their insurance rewards. However, a new inquest would be a victory for those rare causes, truth and justice, and should be rewarded somehow, by somebody.

— *©1983, John M. Ford*



# Contact: Ael Yael

The Ael Yael are among the few exceptions to the time-honored rule of sophontology stating that flying creatures, because of body weight and brain size, and the metabolic requirements for both, will never evolve into intelligent species.

In a universe as broad and diverse as ours, "never" is an uncertain word.

The Ael evolved from flying arboreal hexapods, which used powerful hind- and mid-legs to grasp their prey as they swooped from overhead. A carnivore's cunning, coupled with environmental pressures favored the rise of intelligence. The forelimbs's gliding surfaces eventually became quite serviceable wings (which span four meters), while the mid-limbs became both generalized and flexible enough to permit tool-making.

Ael eyesight is slightly better than that of a human. Their visual range extends into the infrared, giving them good night vision, while a light-sensitive lens pigmentation keeps them from being dazzled by harsh sunlight, or brilliantly reflective surfaces.

The combination of low gravity and dense atmosphere on Jaeyelya (B-484655-4), the homeworld of the Ael, permits flight in creatures as large as they. Adults stand 1.5 meters tall, and mass 50 kg. The planet is drying out, and the once extensive forests have been vanishing during the last thousand years. Some few Ael colonies still live in treetop communes, but most inhabit the caves and fractured cliff-top rocks that overlook *Hi-yayahu lae* — the Glittering Floor. There are probably less than a

million Ael on the entire planet.

## HISTORY

With the coming of the Imperium to Jaeyelya, there was new hope for the survival of this fascinating culture. Large numbers of *Ael yeyehi* (literally "updraft-riders," referring to young Aels just learning to fly) travel off-planet each year to attend Imperial schools and training programs. A number have joined the scout service in particular, and find their several racial talents useful in the exploration of new worlds. The wealth and knowledge returned to Jaeyelya this way may save this culture from extinction. The Hi-yayahu lae cliff-top commune is the guardian of Jaeyelya's primary natural resource: the Glittering Floor is a dry sea bed; vast mineral and metal deposits collected here as the sea evaporated millenia ago. Jaeyelya was first discovered by an Imperial mining corporation, which began tunneling into the Glittering Floor's salt beds looking for manganese and copper. Large numbers of local Aels were effectively enslaved by the corporation; the proud and freedom-loving autochthones fought back, and the bitter war resulted in Imperial intervention and the establishment of an Imperial protectorate on the planet. "The Government Place" is a building at the planet's class B starport facility which serves as the Aels's link with starfaring civilizations. The Aels themselves seem never to have evolved governmental systems themselves, at least none more complex than loose tribal or family structures, and welcome the offworlder's representation. Naturally, they do have an acute distrust for mercantile corporations, and for individuals employed by such concerns. As a result, ores and minerals mined from the dry sea bed are purchased directly from the government, and the planetary mines are a government monopoly.

## SOCIETY

The Ael Yael culture has a rich heritage of recited verse, poetry, and mnemonic literature. They enjoy reading the literature of Imperial peoples, which they like to rework into Aelan literature types in their free time. They are solitary, shun close contact with other races, and always seem somewhat homesick for the craggy cliffs and rock spires above the Glittering Floor. Allusions, metaphors, and similes are often expressed in terms of hunting or flight ("I grasp your meaning," "I need to look down on that idea," "My soul feels wing-clipped"). They are fierce warriors in combat; in hand-to-hand combat they can use their tail as a club, their wings as club −2, and their hindleg talons as claws −1. They cannot fire weapons from cover, however, and will leap straight up into the air when opening fire from behind cover, exposing themselves to unmodified return fire. They suffer morale checks only when fighting in an enclosed area where they cannot take flight, such as within a starship building interior, and so on.

## REFEREE'S INFORMATION

Creation of Ael Yael characters for **Traveller** adventurers is the same as for human characters, with several modifications. Stats can be drawn from any source, or they can be rolled up by the referee.

Characteristic modifications are as follows: 1 is subtracted from the Ael's strength. Social level is treated as an index of the Ael's off-planet experience; a low number indicates that this may be this characters first time off Jaeyelya, and his inexperience and prejudices will be showing. A high social level shows the character has been off-planet many times, is experienced in his dealings with the Imperium, and is respected by both Imperial authorities and Ael Yael.

In rolling up characters, the preferences and prejudices of the race must be taken into account. Jaeyelya has a small militia army, but no planetary navy or marine service. Service in Imperial or subsector military units is not at all common. For attempts to join the army, navy, or marines, a DM −1 is applied to the enlistment and re-enlistment die rolls. The scout service, however, is very popular; characters receive DM+2 for scout enlistment rolls. Because of their attitudes towards commercial concerns, Ael Yael characters may never join the merchants.

The other service is unaffected by enlistment DMs. If, however, Supplement 4, *Citizens of the Imperium* is in use, give a DM+1 to the enlistment in hunter or Belter careers, a DM−1 to pirate or flyer services, and forbid entirely enlistment as nobles. All other career types are handled normally.

Mustering-out benefits are received as usual, except that cash benefits must be divided between the individual and the Planetary Development Fund. The character receives only 10% of the amount indicated by the table. Material benefits are not affected, only cash.

When an Ael is a part of an adventuring party, the referee should give favorable DMs to the group for achieving surprises, and for spotting potential threats, distant buildings, or artifacts. This reflects the Ael's keen eyesight.

Aels never developed sophisticated tools or weapons. They now have a few projectile weapons based on Imperial designs, but have never been comfortable with mechanisms that kill at a distance. They can handle Imperial weapons, but suffer an automatic DM−2 when rolling to hit to reflect the problems they have in handling or firing a weapon not designed for their hands. When attacking, they prefer to leap several meters into the air and hover (when gravity and atmosphere permit them flight), firing wildly all the while. They have difficulty firing from cover, both psychologically and anatomically.

Aels can fly on worlds of size 6 or less with dense atmospheres. In standard atmospheres, or on worlds of sizes 7 or 8, they can glide from high elevations to lower ones, hover for a few seconds, or ride the updrafts that can be found alongside cliffs or within canyons. They require breathing apparatus to live on worlds with thin atmospheres, and, of course, flight is impossible for them in such environments. Vacc suits have been designed for Aels, but they can wear these only by folding their wings. Generally, Aels in **Traveller** will be NPCs. Should players wish to assume the character of an Ael, they should remember that Ael psychology is influenced strongly by several factors.

First, travelling Ael feel they have a responsibility to the entire Ael Yael race. Except for a small living allowance, everything they earn is turned over to a planetary trust fund administered by the protectorate government on Jaeyelya. When an Ael signs up for a job, it will be with the good of the race in mind, and how they might be benefited.

A second factor is a deep-seated distrust (sometimes a hatred) of corporations and businesses throughout the Imperium, especially those involved in mining or planetary exploitation. Experienced Aels (with social levels of 9 or more) will understand that not all big business interests involve murder and genocide, but they will never trust merchant characters unreservedly. They will join an enterprise sponsored by merchants or corporations only if they see very large rewards for their planet in accepting such a job. If they find themselves in a situation where a culture is being exploited or victimized, they will without hesitation side with the wronged

party and will work (secretly or openly) on their behalf. These tendencies are strong enough that if they are faced with a direct conflict (if, for instance, their helping exploit a primitive people will greatly benefit their own world financially) they may suffer nervous collapse.

Properly administered, the Ael Yael can add a great deal to a campaign.

*—William H. Keith & J. Andrew Keith*

*continued from page 25*

time. The planetary lottery taps 500 citizens each week for a unit of blood. The guerrilla movement means to destroy this system (the heart impaled on thorns is an ancient magical death symbol); their suicide squads take hemotoxin so their blood cannot be used by the Primacy (one guess as to how criminals on Sainte Foy are executed).

The situation is still more complex. The Primacy is not really a horrible, evil court of vampires; they are actually rather good rulers with a peculiar and difficult problem that they, with good reason, do not expect off-worlders to understand. Almost all Foyan citizens support the Primacy, the lottery (which is scrupulously fair), and the system in general; the government type should actually be listed as C.

The blood purchase is an attempt by the Primacy to stop (literally) bleeding the citizens. In the past they have had the usual Foyan objections to dealing with outsiders, and difficulty in purchasing the required quantities of whole blood (which is not common in Imperial hospitals, blood components and synthetics being used instead). Recently, however, Isoplastics Inc. (the transplantable tissues division of the huge medical cartel Mercy General) offered 20,000 units at double the usual price, and the Foyans took the offer.

What the purchasers do not know is that Isoplastics diverted several shipments of blood from regular deliveries to assemble this extra profit load. As a result, several hospitals have been left with no stock, and at least one person has died. This helps to explain the secrecy of the group's hiring factor . . .

The length of the trek across Sainte Foy's wilderness, and the number of guerrilla harassing the marchers, must be determined by the referee. The mountain range is not as friendly as Colorado Springs and not as hostile as the Tien Shan or Eigerwand north face. Search parties will be out as soon as the train misses a scheduled station; they will be armed and riding snow vehicles and (weather permitting) helicopters. Any settlements (mines, camps, etc.) will shelter the group, unless the settlement is actually a guerrilla stronghold!

Also to be determined is who sabotaged the communicators; if one of the Chrysolites is a guerrilla, the adventurers could be in serious trouble (though he might also die protecting them — remember, they're fanatics).

There is a distinct possibility that the Imperium will prosecute Isoplastics Inc. for malfeasance and murder. Mercy General itself is too powerful to be affected, but someone will have to be made a scapegoat.

They knew the job was dangerous when they took it . . .

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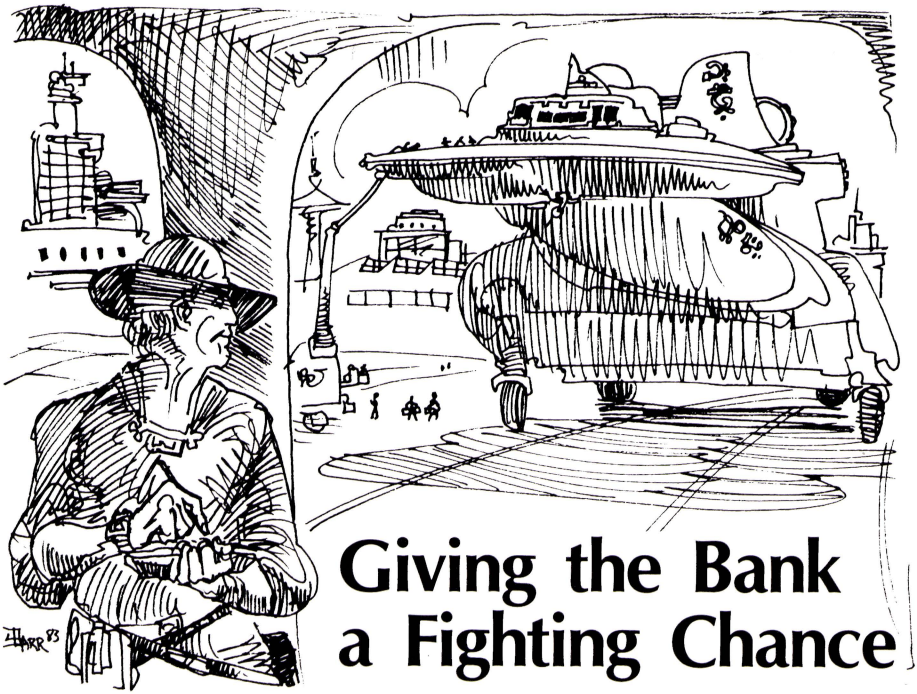


# Giving the Bank a Fighting Chance

Sergeant Cutter and his band have just arrived at Regina. After their latest venture, they have enough money pooled together to make the down payment on that ship they've been dreaming of.

The bank is contacted and the construction begins. Months later an excited crew boards its new home and shuttles out of orbit. They spend several months trading along the established routes, making sure the payments are promptly made each month. Then, when cutter is certain the bank's suspicions are allayed, he gives the order to skip. The plan is to leave Regina subsector far behind, along with the bank and its cumbersome payments.

The Bank of Regina gets burned again, or does it? Obviously, a bank which finances the construction of ships costing into the billions of credits has methods of preventing (or at least discouraging) such acts and of bringing the perpetrators to justice. Banks finance ships knowing the risks involved, and they do everything possible to push the odds over into their favor.

The following is a method of dealing with skipping as it is handled in my campaign, as well as a possible new source of income and adventure for players.

## THE BANK

Whether your campaign has an independent bank on each world, a subsector or sector wide organization with branch banks on each world, or a master bank with a central headquarters and numerous branches, it is not illogical to assume that banks will cooperate to reduce losses. This will most likely take the form of an information sharing network among all banks in a given empire or at least within a sector. Banks would need information on a client's credit rating to efficiently screen bad risks. Such a system can be assumed to be in effect within the Imperium, and within the other interstellar empires of the *Traveller* universe. There is a very good

possibility that information is shared between empires, under normal conditions.

Given this system, characters who make a bad record for themselves in one region will find their record following them throughout their travels. The ways of getting around this (forged ID documents, shell companies, assumed names, etc.) are all imperfect, and involve some degree of risk. Buying a ship and getting around the system can be a major challenge to a group of adventurers, and can provide months of pleasurable gaming sessions.

## PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

Banks take very direct steps to prevent clients from skipping out before their loan is repaid. The simplest way, and in the long run, the cheapest, is to screen out unfavorable clients beforehand. Before the loan is finalized, a credit check and background review will be conducted. If these reveal no problems, and the client shows an ability to repay the loan it will be approved. These checks will vary from exhaustive research for new clients to rather token searches for well-established clients or large property owners with deep roots in the region concerned.

*Credit:* Banks will know of bad credit characters have established with other banks, unless that information could not reasonably have reached the bank at that time or the players have taken measures (such as false names, bribes, etc.) to prevent it. In general, banks send out information on skippers or delinquent payments as soon as such status is realized. Inside the Imperium, information reaches other banks in rough correlation with the x-boat system.

*Collateral:* A bank will often demand that a client put up property to act as security for a loan. Though it is rarely enough to cover the price of a ship, it has been found to have some deterrent effect.

*Background Review:* Banks will study the client's travelling and business habits. Specifically, they will look for criminal records, a tendency to fail in business ventures, and any involvement with organizations which the bank considers questionable. If there is any doubt about the character's background, it is very likely that the loan will be denied.

*Intended use:* Banks place a great deal of weight on the use to which the ship will be put. Possible use of a ship in a risky venture will be cause for the bank to deny the loan, but stable ventures with low profit margins will not look very promising either.

Most banks are reluctant to completely trust some clients with the several million credits involved in building a ship, even though no flaws in the client's background can be discovered. In cases like these, some banks have been known to take additional measures to secure the bank's investment. A timer may be built into a ship's computer so that the computer will cease functioning if it is not reset by a bank official each month after the payment is tendered. The timer, of course, is removed when the payments are completed. Most banks, however, find it simpler to deny the loan application in the first place.

## REPOS

Despite all the measures bank's take to deter skipping, a clever group will occasionally slip past the safeguards, or an honest group will succumb to temptation. This is where the repos come in.

Repos are people who pursue and retrieve ships and crews who have skipped. The term is descended from the word "repossession". Occasionally, a repo will be hired to retrieve other stolen property.

There are basically two types of repos, those who work for a bank or other

financial institution and the independents (who work for themselves).

Company repos receive a salary (generally Cr50,000 per year) plus a bonus of 2% of the value of the recovered ship. Their employer pays their expenses. They have access to their firm's information network, and can usually count on the cooperation of local financial institutions and police.

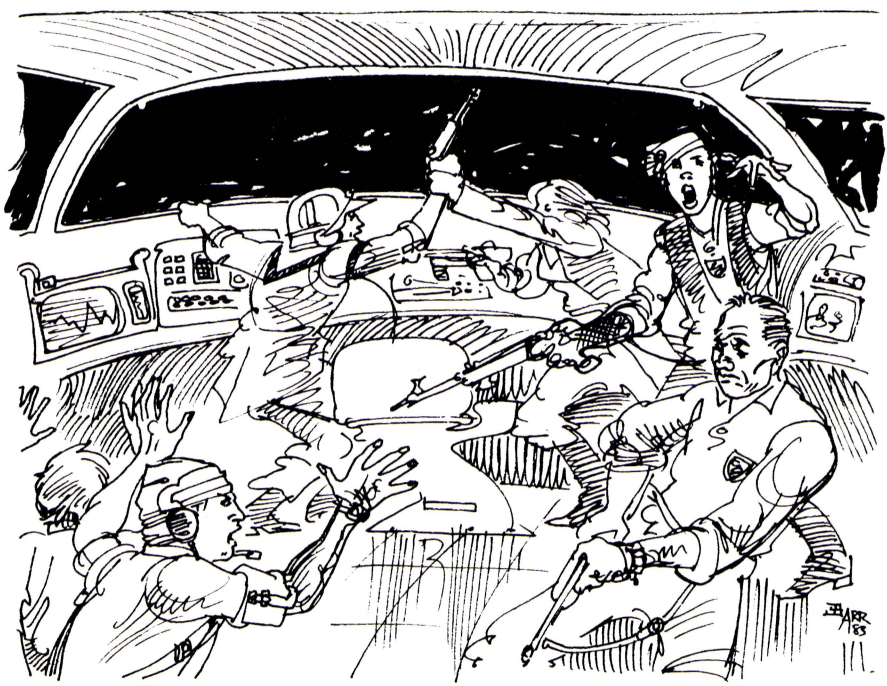
Independents have no financial backing, and generally charge expenses plus 2-5% of the value of the recovered vessel. If some or all of the crew are wanted for other crimes, the repo can collect all of any reward for their apprehension.

## THE REPOS' TRADE

An individual wishing to become a repo usually starts by consulting the current Shipping Registry in any large library at A and B starports. The delinquent section lists all ships in the subsector posted delinquent by a financial institution, their last known location, the ship's description and transponder codes, the names of the crew, the value of the vessel, and the institution seeking repossession. Most of these ships are probably being sought by company employees, but there is always a chance that an independent can beat them to it.

An individual with connections (admin-2 or greater) can have access to the "scorched list." This is a list of vessels whose crews have killed one or more repos. These ships often have recovery fees of up to 10% of the ship's value. These vessels are also being sought by law enforcement authorities, who have a low opinion of repos in general and independents in particular. Seeking vessels on the scorched list often involves considerable risk.

*Legal Aspects:* Legally, company repos are employees of the financial institution holding title to a skipped vessel, and are allowed to take direct possession. Independents are (from a legal



standpoint) ordinary citizens reclaiming another's stolen property, and must immediately turn the ship over to the local authorities. Repos are allowed to use reasonable force to take possession of a skipped vessel, and may defend themselves if attacked, but they are all subject to the murder statutes (even in the case of ships from the scorched list, although judges are often lenient in such cases).

If a ship's cargo belongs to the crew of the skipped vessel, it becomes the property of the financial institution holding the note on the ship. If it belongs to a party unconnected with the skipped vessel (if it has been stolen, or is a contracted cargo), it remains their property.

Repos are not law enforcement officers, and cannot call for assistance from law enforcement agencies. They have no rights over and above ordinary citizens, except for the few they gain if they are employed by the company holding the note on the vessel. They are subject to criminal prosecution for any laws they break in pursuit of a skipped vessel.

*Tracking Skips:* Tracking is not following physical tracks through space, but the skillful use of available information combined with intuition. An experienced repo will look at the background review conducted by the bank (available automatically if a company repo, otherwise roll 8+, DM admin skill) to see if there are any specific regions the crew frequents, any preferred business ventures, travel patterns, and so on. Because of the large number of variables, it is impossible to give specific rules for tracking a stolen ship in the space available, so individual referees will have to determine the results according to the situation.

**CONCLUSION**

Banks and other financial institutions are not suckers. Players who skip out on their payments should spend the rest of their career looking over their shoulder (after all, nobody said life was going to be easy).

Repos should add flavor to any campaign, whether as a new way of making money, or as another thing for your players to worry about as they travel the universe.

— *Jolly R. Blackburn*

*continued from page 34*

holding such life forms. Characteristics of such a world generally include a lack of normal carbon-based life forms, or exotic or very little atmospheres. Infestations usually result from prospecting or smuggling activities.

Unlicensed transport of Doyle's Eel or similar creatures is considered negligent transport of a harmful species, and is punishable by fines ranging from Cr100 to Cr10,000 and/or a prison term of 1 to 10 years (depending upon what damage,if any, is done by the animals). Licenses are seldom granted except to reputable scientific institutions, such as zoos, universities, and so on.

— *John Marshal*

# High Guard: Optional Rules

The ship-combat rules in *High Guard* are excellent for large scale naval actions in deep space, but some concessions were made to preserve playability. Here are some ideas for expansion of the rules.

## CREW CASUALTIES

In the present system, each point of crew strength represents a power of ten crewmen. A ship with a code of 3 has 1000 to 9999 men aboard; a code of 1 represents 10 to 99 men. Damage to the crew reduces the code, a rather unrealistic method. To improve the feel of the system, divide th crew into equal sections. A ship would have one section of crew aboard for each 1000 tons of hull, rounded up to a whole number. Each section has an equal amount of crewmen in it. The *Kinunir*, for example, is a 1200 ton vessel, with 45 crew members. The ship would have two sections (1200/1000 = 1.2 or 2), each with 23 members (45/2 = 22.5 or 23).

The frozen watch on a ship could replace sections of lost crew providing there are enough crew in cold sleep to replace an entire section. For example, if the *Kinunir* had a watch with 30 crew, one section could be replaced, but the 7 remaining could not fill another lost section.

## POWERING DOWN

Ships in non-combat situations can be "powered down" to reduce the fuel consumption of the ship's power plant. The minimum level of power plant is one, which is enough to power the life support systems and maintain maneuver drive-1, jump drive-1, etc. No energy-using weapons may be used in powered down condition. Ships which spend an entire 4 week period in powered down state reduce the fuel consumption of the power plant to the powered down level.

If a ship is caught by an enemy in a powered down state, the crew may attempt to bring the power plant up to full blast. One turn is required for each level of power plant to be restored. No energy-using weapons or shields may be operated during this "stoking-up" period, and agility is reduced to one.

## EVACUATION

Crew on ships that are doomed for some reason or other may abandon ship. For each ship's vehicle capable of space flight, roll 2 dice and multiply by 10. The result is the percentage of the vehicle's passenger capacity that is occupied upon evacuation. Lifeboats have a DM +2 on this roll, due to easy accessibility. Note that an evacuating craft may be overloaded, and the life support systems may suffer. Crew remaining aboard after all of the small craft have departed may escape in vacc suits. Roll 2D and multiply by ten for the percentage that escape out of those remaining (results over 100% are considered to be equal to 100%).

## FIGHTERS

Fighters, small vessels based on large warships to act as patrol vessels and screens, often prove useless in battles between big ships; their relatively puny weapons can't hit, much less penetrate the defenses of the larger ships. The rules below are a further definition and expansion of space-fighters abilities.

*Organization:* Fighters are almost always organized into squadrons of eight or ten fighters. Not all of the vessels have to be of the same design, but all must have the same agility. The number of fighters or squadrons on a larger vessel is noted by a single hexadecimal digit: 1-9 representing the number of fighters if under ten, A representing one squadron, B representing two squadrons, etc. If an off-number of fighters remain after a number of whole squadrons have been assembled, they may be formed into an understrength semi-squadron. The existence of this understrength squadron should be noted.

*Squadron Assignment:* At the beginning of each round, during the squadron formation step, each vessel carrying fighter squadrons may assign them to a variety of roles. These roles include front-line combat duty (in which case they are treated as normal ships), missile screen duty, close attack, reserve screen, and flexible force. The counter(s) representing the ships in the squadrons assigned to a role are stacked adjacent to the carrying/protected vessel (a ship may donate its own vessels to screen another ship or ships, such as a tanker).

An explanation of the special roles squadrons can perform is given below.

*Missile Screen:* Squadrons assigned to this role can use their weapons to defend another vessel. To effectively cover the ship being protected, one squadron must be assigned to each attacking ship's missile fire. If desired, additional squadrons may double-up on the fire from one attacking ship.

The fighter's weapons are used to defend against the incoming batteries of fire as though they were mounted on the vessel being defended, with the following exceptions.

No more than half of the weapons in the squadrons assigned to attack a single ship's incoming missile fire may attack any one battery of fire. Thus, if a ship firing 3 code-9 missile attacks had its fire opposed by twenty ships with one fusion gun each, the player controlling the fighters could assign up to ten guns on a given battery of fire; of course, the total number of guns fired cannot exceed twenty.

Missile batteries may be used, but sandcasters may not be.

The fighter's computer is used to compute relative computer level to find penetration DMs.

*Close Attack:* This is a risky maneuver consisting of a head-long run to close with a target vessel. Squadrons designated as making a close attack may be fired on as if at close range if the two sides are at far range, and at close range

with +1 to hit if at close range. If the vessels survive the combat round, they may attack the target vessel at +2 to hit, +1 to penetrate (in addition to DMs due to being at close range). The fighters must return to the line of battle.

*Reserve Screen:* Only ships in the reserve line may assign squadrons to this role. Designated squadrons may fire on ships which break through, but suffer a −1 DM to hit.

*Flexible Force:* Ships placed in this role may be used to intercept missiles, attack as normal ships, or reserve screen. Only half of the force may act; the other vessels are inactive.

— *Stefan Jones*

*continued from page 29*

Don't have things happen too fast—this could take days of game time - and especially don't bring on Dr. Wexler too soon. (If you can convince the players that the missing people are already dead, so much the better.)

If Wexler lives long enough, he will launch the top level and depart; he and anyone with him (possible only if Wexler brings the person inside) will never be heard from again. After separation, the lower levels will be suddenly and violently flooded. The glowstrips will continue working, but no means are available to seal and pump the structure dry.

If Wexler dies, the site will again become an inert artifact of historical interest only. Treatment of his fatal condition will also break his link with the psicon. Under no circumstances will anyone achieve "control" of the psicon, and Wexler's "lucky" accident is not reproducible!

Possible surprises include the finding of a body, knifed by the mad doctor (in the best slasher movie tradition); a hunt for the sunken submersible; confrontations with Dr. Morningside over possession of the data cartridges (she will not voluntarily give them up to anyone, including self-styled "rescuers", while able to resist) or with the pugnacious Dr. Benda and her black belt; appearance of the Kehaani ocean life the aliens were studying (its nature determined by the referee); and the mystery of what killed the original crew.

It will probably be necessary for the Zhodani and Imperials to cooperate in order for all to survive. Capt. Chizhiliepr is intelligent, though under great stress, and will do what he must—but will not forget who controls this part of space.

And escaping from Zho space with five scientists and two satchels of data could be an adventure in its own right.

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*continued from page 7*

by 600. Massive stockpiles of CBW weaponry and countermeasures were sold to the Imperium at the start of the Third Frontier War (none were used), and at the war's end a CBW plant was established on Shirene (Lunion 0505).

SuSAG has other major facilities in the Rhylanor (Rhylanor 0306), Fornice (Mora 0605), and Trin (Trin's Veil 0805) systems. SuSAG subsidiaries have facilities at most non-Zhodani systems.

Each SuSAG division maintains offices at A and B starports in the Marches. SuSAG maintains no offices and owns no subsidiaries in territories under Zhodani control, but some trade was done before the recent war.

The extra-Imperial division maintains a large psi drug manufacturing facility at Tarsus (District 268 0308), as well as other (non-psi drug) facilities in the Zamine (Darrian 0401), and Collace (District 268 0407) systems.

District 268 is considered an important enough region to rate an RGM all its own.

## SUSAG IN THE SOLOMANI RIM

SuSAG has an extensive presence in

the Rim, dating from the acquisition of Inidu (Concord 0806) from its original owners in 425, just before the admission of the Easter Concord into the Imperium. All divisions of SuSAG are active in the Rim, and its offices can be found at all A and B starports in Imperial space.

Inidu is owned by SuSAG's R&D division, and the populace is employed by SuSAG.

The Extra Imperial division, through subsidiary companies, has installations on dozens of worlds within the Solomani Confederation. SuSAG's affiliation with these companies is kept hidden from the public at large, because of the bad feeling that would be generated by an Imperial firm controlling Solomani companies.

Manufacture of psi drugs is illegal in the Solomani Confederation, and SuSAG runs no psi drug plants there (although, as with the Imperium, smuggled SuSAG psi drugs are sold on the black market).

**CONCLUSION**

It is hoped that this brief look at SuSAG will help referees to run player interactions with all megacorporations. For an example of a SuSAG-backed operation, see Adventure 9, *Nomads of the World Ocean.*

*— Loren K. Wiseman*

*continued from page 16*

porkbelly futures prices, who played the Lone Ranger on flat screen. Finger does not think of this as a "talent," and in fact it is not psionic in nature, or something he "does"; it's just the way his mind works.

Adventurers are attracted to Finger ("like rocks to a black hole" is how one person put it); he is always looking for new old friends to bankroll a deal, or help out physically if they have no money to invest. He rarely becomes involved in travel himself, preferring to run things from his barstool. (For this reason, his vast array of skills do not unbalance any specific scenario.) Many, but by no means all, adventures will involve a goodie. When designing the goodies, keep in mind that they should not be inherently valuable, nor fantasy-game Artifacts of Cosmic Power. If Finger shows off a machine that turns peanut butter into diamonds, the end product probably won't cut glass; and anything that kills people is right out. Finger does not deal in weapons; except to permanently lose them.

Goodies should be things that a clever person could turn to a small advantage, simply because nobody expects them. Once everybody knows the cards can change, or an empty crate weighs as much as a full one, or the cheap wine turns into VSOP, they will make allowances for the fact, and the effect will be lost. Think of goodies as magic tricks; if you know the magician has a rabbit in his hat, he might as well not bother to take the hat off.

Adventures directly involving Finger should be low-keyed. Don't have a firefight erupt in his tavern; have a barroom brawl instead. In fact, a little pie-throwing would not be out of place, because Lothario Lochinvar is basically a comic character. (The "deals" he sends players on may, of course, be deadly serious. If you have not read Poul Anderson's *Trader Team* stories, read them.) Anybody who seriously threatens the old swindler with personal harm will find a roomful, then a portful, then a planetful and an Imperium-ful of his real old friends in the way. So relax. Buy the trader a drink and listen to the deal he's worked out for you. It'll probably be a little silly, but you'll make a few credits and you probably won't get shot at so much.

And if humanity does in fact survive into the far future, it will probably have had much less to do with our weapons than with our sense of humor.

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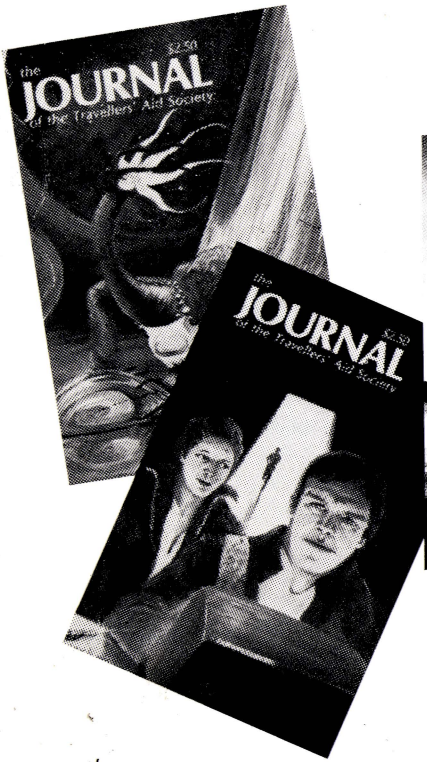


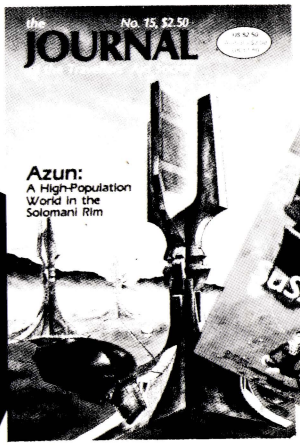

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